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THE

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LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
NEW YORK · LONDON · TORONTO

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BOOK OF ROMANCE

EDITED BY

ANDREW LANG

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY H. J. FORD

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
55 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
TORONTO, BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS
1927

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BY

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

First Edition, September, 1902.
Reprinted, October, 1903.
Reprinted, January, 1909.
Reprinted, June, 1913.
Reprinted, January, 1915.
Reprinted, March, 1926
Reprinted, November, 1927

MADE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

It is to be supposed that children do not read Prefaces; these are Bluebeard's rooms, which they are not curious to unlock. A few words may therefore be said about the Romances contained in this book. In the editor's opinion, romances are only fairy tales grown up. The whole mass of the plot and incident of romance was invented by nobody knows who, nobody knows when, nobody knows where. Almost every people has the Cinderella story, with all sorts of variations: a boy hero in place of a girl heroine, a beast in place of a fairy godmother, and so on. The Zuñis, an agricultural tribe of New Mexico, have a version in which the moral turns out to be against poor Cinderella, who comes to an ill end. The Red Indians have the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, told in a very touching shape, but without the music. On the other hand, the negroes in the States have the Orpheus tale, adapted to plantation life, in a form which is certainly borrowed from Europeans. This version was sent to me some years ago by Mr. Barnet Phillips, Brooklyn, New York, and I give it here for its curiosity. If the proper names, Jim Orpus and Dicey, had not been given, we might not feel absolutely certain that the story was borrowed. It is a good example of adaptation from the heroic age of Greece to the servile age of Africans.

Dicey and Orpus

Dat war eber so long ago, 'cause me grammammy tell me so. It h'aint no white-folks yarn — no Sah. Gall she war call Dicey, an' she war borned on de plantation.

Whar Jim Orpus kum from, granmammy she disremember. He war a boss-fiddler, he war, an' jus' that powerful, dat when de mules in de cotton field listen to um, dey no budge in de furrer. Orpus he neber want no mess of fish, ketched wid a angle. He just take him fiddle an' fool along de branch, an' play a tune, an' up dey comes, an' he cotch 'em in he hans. He war mighty sot on Dicey, an' dey war married all proper an' reg'lar. Hit war so long ago, dat de railroad war a bran-new spick an' span ting in dose days. Dicey once she lounge 'round de track, 'cause she tink she hear Orpus a fiddlin' in de fur-fur-away. Onyways de hengine smash her. Den Jim Orpus he took on turrible, an' when she war buried, he sot him down on de grave, an' he fiddle an' he fiddle till most yo' heart was bruk.

An' he play so long dat de groun' crummle (crumble) an' sink, an' nex' day, when de peoples look for Jim Orpus, dey no find um; oney big-hole in de lot, an' nobody never see Jim Orpus no mo'. An' dey do say, dat ef yo' go inter a darky's burial-groun', providin' no white man been planted thar, an' yo' clap yo' ear to de groun', yo' can hear Jim's fiddle way down deep belo', a folloin' Dicey fru' de lan' of de Golden Slippah.[1]

The original touch, the sound of Orpus's fiddle heard only in the graveyards of the negroes (like the fairy music under the fairy hill at Ballachulish), is very remarkable. Now the Red Indian story has no harper, and no visit by the hero to the land of the dead. His grief brings his wife back to him, and he loses her again by breaking a taboo, as Orpheus did by looking back, a thing always forbidden. Thus we do not know whether or not the Red Indian version is borrowed from the European myth, probably enough it is not. But in no

[1] Mr. Phillips, writing in 1896, says that the tale was told him by a plantation hand, thirty years ago, 'long before the Uncle Remus period.'

case — not even when the same plot and incidents occur among Egyptians and the Central Australian tribes, or among the frosty Samoyeds and Eskimo, the Samoans, the Andamanese, the Zulus, and the Japanese, as well as among Celts and ancient Greeks — can we be absolutely certain that the story has not been diffused and borrowed, in the backward of time. Thus the date and place of origin of these eternal stories, the groundwork of ballads and popular tales, can never be ascertained. The oldest known version may be found in the literature of Egypt or Chaldæa, but it is an obvious fallacy to argue that the place of origin must be the place where the tale was first written down in hieroglyph or cuneiform characters.

There the stories are: they are as common among the remotest savages as among the peasants of Hungary, France, or Assynt. They bear all the birth-marks of an early society, with the usual customs and superstitions of man in such a stage of existence. Their oldest and least corrupted forms exist among savages, and people who do not read and write. But when reading and writing and a class of professional minstrels and tellers of tales arose, these men invented no new plots, but borrowed the plots and incidents of the world-old popular stories. They adapted these to their own condition of society, just as the plantation negroes adapted Orpheus and Eurydice. They elevated the nameless heroes and heroines into Kings, Queens, and Knights, Odysseus, Arthur, Charlemagne, Diarmid, and the rest. They took an ancient popular tale, known all over the earth, and attributed the adventures of the characters to historical persons, like Charlemagne and his family, or to Saints, for the legends of early Celtic Saints are full of fairy-tale materials. Characters half historic, half fabulous, like Arthur, were endowed with fairy gifts, and inherited the feats of nameless imaginary heroes.

The results of this uncritical literary handling of elements really popular were the national romances of

Arthur, of Charlemagne, of Sigurd, or of Etzel. The pagan legends were Christianised, like that of Beowulf; they were expanded into measureless length, whole cycles were invented about the heroic families; poets altered the materials each in his own way and to serve his own purpose, and often to glorify his own country. If the Saracens told their story of Roland at Roncevalles, it would be very different from that of the old Frankish *chansons de geste*. Thus the romances are a mixture of popular tales, of literary invention, and of history as transmitted in legend. To the charm of fairy tale they add the fascination of the age of chivalry, yet I am not sure but that children will prefer the fairy tale pure and simple, nor am I sure that their taste would be wrong, if they did.

In the versions here offered, the story of Arthur is taken mainly from Malory's compilation, from sources chiefly French, but the opening of the Graal story is adapted from Mr. Sebastian Evans's 'High History of the Holy Graal,' a masterpiece of the translator's art. For permission to adapt this chapter I have to thank the kindness of Mr. Evans.

The story of Roland is from the French Epic, probably of the eleventh century, but resting on earlier materials, legend and ballad. William Short Nose is also from the *chanson de geste* of that hero.

The story of Diarmid, ancient Irish and also current among the Dalriadic invaders of Argyle, is taken from the translations in the Transactions of the Ossianic Society.

The story of Robin Hood is from the old English ballads of the courteous outlaw, whose feast, in Scotland, fell in the early days of May. His alleged date varies between the ages of Richard I. and Edward II., but all the labours of the learned have thrown no light on this popular hero.

A child can see how *English* Robin is, how human,

and possible and good-humoured are his character and feats, while Arthur is half Celtic, half French and chivalrous, and while the deeds of the French Roland, and of the Celtic Diarmid are exaggerated beyond the possible. There is nothing of the fairylike in Robin, and he has no thirst for the Ideal. Had we given the adventures of Sir William Wallace, from Blind Harry, it would have appeared that the Lowland Scots could exaggerate like other people.

The story of Wayland the Smith is very ancient. An ivory in the British Museum, apparently of the eighth century, represents Wayland making the cups out of the skulls. As told here the legend is adapted from the amplified version by Oehlenschläger. Scott's use of the story in 'Kenilworth' will be remembered.

All the romances are written by Mrs. Lang, except the story of Grettir the Strong, done by Mr. H. S. C. Everard from the saga translated by Mr. William Morris.

A. LANG.

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TALES OF THE ROUND TABLE

THE DRAWING OF THE SWORD

Long, long ago, after Uther Pendragon died, there was no King in Britain, and every Knight hoped to seize the crown for himself. The country was like to fare ill when laws were broken on every side, and the corn which was to give the poor bread was trodden underfoot, and there was none to bring the evildoer to justice. Then, when things were at their worst, came forth Merlin the magician, and fast he rode to the place where the Archbishop of Canterbury had his dwelling. And they took counsel together, and agreed that all the lords and gentlemen of Britain should ride to London and meet on Christmas Day, now at hand, in the Great Church. So this was done. And on Christmas morning, as they left the church, they saw in the churchyard a large stone, and on it a bar of steel, and in the steel a naked sword was held, and about it was written in letters of gold, 'Whoso pulleth out this sword is by right of birth King of England.' They marvelled at these words, and called for the Archbishop, and brought him into the place where the stone stood. Then those Knights who fain would be King could not hold themselves back, and they tugged at the sword with all their might; but it never stirred. The Archbishop watched them in silence, but when they were faint from pulling he spoke: 'The man is not here who shall lift out that sword, nor do I know where to find him. But this is my counsel — that two Knights be chosen, good and true men, to keep guard over the sword.'

Thus it was done. But the lords and gentlemen-at-

arms cried out that every man had a right to try to win the sword, and they decided that on New Year's Day a tournament should be held, and any Knight who would, might enter the lists.

So on New Year's Day, the Knights, as their custom was, went to hear service in the Great Church, and after it was over they met in the field to make ready for the tourney. Among them was a brave Knight called Sir Ector, who brought with him Sir Kay, his son, and Arthur, Kay's foster-brother. Now Kay had unbuckled his sword the evening before, and in his haste to be at the tourney had forgotten to put it on again, and he begged Arthur to ride back and fetch it for him. But when Arthur reached the house the door was locked, for the women had gone out to see the tourney, and though Arthur tried his best to get in he could not. Then he rode away in great anger, and said to himself, 'Kay shall not be without a sword this day. I will take that sword in the churchyard, and give it to him'; and he galloped fast till he reached the gate of the churchyard. Here he jumped down and tied his horse tightly to a tree, then, running up to the stone, he seized the handle of the sword, and drew it easily out; afterwards he mounted his horse again, and delivered the sword to Sir Kay. The moment Sir Kay saw the sword he knew it was not his own, but the sword of the stone, and he sought out his father Sir Ector, and said to him, 'Sir, this is the sword of the stone, therefore I am the rightful King.' Sir Ector made no answer, but signed to Kay and Arthur to follow him, and they all three went back to the church. Leaving their horses outside, they entered the choir, and here Sir Ector took a holy book and bade Sir Kay swear how he came by that sword. 'My brother Arthur gave it to me,' replied Sir Kay. 'How did you come by it?' asked Sir Ector, turning to Arthur. 'Sir,' said Arthur, 'when I rode home for my brother's sword I found no one to deliver it to me, and as I resolved he should not

HOW ARTHVR DREW THE SWORD

be swordless I thought of the sword in this stone, and I pulled it out.' 'Were any Knights present when you did this?' asked Sir Ector. 'No, none,' said Arthur. 'Then it is you,' said Sir Ector, 'who are the rightful King of this land.' 'But why am I the King?' inquired Arthur. 'Because,' answered Sir Ector, 'this is an enchanted sword, and no man could draw it but he who was born a King. Therefore put the sword back into the stone, and let me see you take it out.' 'That is soon done,' said Arthur, replacing the sword, and Sir Ector himself tried to draw it, but he could not. 'Now it is your turn,' he said to Sir Kay, but Sir Kay fared no better than his father, though he tugged with all his might and main. 'Now you, Arthur,' and Arthur pulled it out as easily as if it had been lying in its sheath, and as he did so Sir Ector and Sir Kay sank on their knees before him. 'Why do you, my father and brother, kneel to me?' asked Arthur in surprise. 'Nay, nay, my lord,' answered Sir Ector, 'I was never your father, though till to-day I did not know who your father really was. You are the son of Uther Pendragon, and you were brought to me when you were born by Merlin himself, who promised that when the time came I should know from whom you sprang. And now it has been revealed to me.' But when Arthur heard that Sir Ector was not his father, he wept bitterly. 'If I am King,' he said at last, 'ask what you will, and I shall not fail you. For to you, and to my lady and mother, I owe more than to anyone in the world, for she loved me and treated me as her son.' 'Sir,' replied Sir Ector, 'I only ask that you will make your foster-brother, Sir Kay, Seneschal[1] of all your lands.' 'That I will readily,' answered Arthur, 'and while he and I live no other shall fill that office.'

Sir Ector then bade them seek out the Archbishop with him, and they told him all that had happened concerning the sword, which Arthur had left standing in the

[1] 'Seneschal' means steward.

stone. And on the Twelfth Day the Knights and Barons came again, but none could draw it out but Arthur. When they saw this, many of the Barons became angry and cried out that they would never own a boy for King whose blood was no better than their own. So it was agreed to wait till Candlemas, when more Knights might be there, and meanwhile the same two men who had been chosen before watched the sword night and day; but at Candlemas it was the same thing, and at Easter. And when Pentecost came, the common people who were present, and saw Arthur pull out the sword, cried with one voice that he was their King, and they would kill any man who said differently. Then rich and poor fell on their knees before him, and Arthur took the sword and offered it upon the altar where the Archbishop stood, and the best man that was there made him Knight. After that the crown was put on his head, and he swore to his lords and commons that he would be a true King, and would do them justice all the days of his life.

THE QUESTING BEAST

But Arthur had many battles to fight and many Kings to conquer before he was acknowledged lord of them all, and often he would have failed had he not listened to the wisdom of Merlin, and been helped by his sword Excalibur, which in obedience to Merlin's orders he never drew till things were going ill with him. Later it shall be told how the King got the sword Excalibur, which shone so bright in his enemies' eyes that they fell back, dazzled by the brightness. Many Knights came to his standard, and among them Sir Ban, King of Gaul beyond the sea, who was ever his faithful friend. And it was in one of these wars, when King Arthur and King Ban and King Bors went to the rescue of the King of Cameliard, that Arthur saw Guenevere, the King's daughter, whom he afterwards wedded. By and by King Ban and King Bors returned to their own country across the sea, and the King went to Carlion, a town on the river Usk, where a strange dream came to him.

He thought that the land was over-run with gryphons and serpents which burnt and slew his people, and he made war on the monsters, and was sorely wounded, though at last he killed them all. When he awoke the remembrance of his dream was heavy upon him, and to shake it off he summoned his Knights to hunt with him, and they rode fast till they reached a forest. Soon they spied a hart before them, which the King claimed as his game, and he spurred his horse and rode after him. But the hart ran fast and the King could not get near it, and

the chase lasted so long that the King himself grew heavy and his horse fell dead under him. Then he sat under a tree and rested, till he heard the baying of hounds, and fancied he counted as many as thirty of them. He raised his head to look, and, coming towards him, saw a beast so strange that its like was not to be found throughout his kingdom. It went straight to the well and drank, making as it did so the noise of many hounds baying, and when it had drunk its fill the beast went its way.

While the King was wondering what sort of a beast this could be, a Knight rode by, who, seeing a man lying under a tree, stopped and said to him: 'Knight full of thought and sleepy, tell me if a strange beast has passed this way?'

'Yes, truly,' answered Arthur, 'and by now it must be two miles distant. What do you want with it?'

'Oh sir, I have followed that beast from far,' replied he, 'and have ridden my horse to death. If only I could find another I would still go after it.' As he spoke a squire came up leading a fresh horse for the King, and when the Knight saw it he prayed that it might be given to him, 'for,' said he, 'I have followed this quest this twelvemonth, and either I shall slay him or he will slay me.'

'Sir Knight,' answered the King, 'you have done your part; leave now your quest, and let me follow the beast for the same time that you have done.' 'Ah, fool!' replied the Knight, whose name was Pellinore, 'it would be all in vain, for none may slay that beast but I or my next of kin'; and without more words he sprang into the saddle. 'You may take my horse by force,' said the King, 'but I should like to prove first which of us two is the better horseman.'

'Well,' answered the Knight, 'when you want me, come to this spring. Here you will always find me,' and, spurring his horse, he galloped away. The King watched

ARTHUR · AND · THE · QUESTING-BEAST

him till he was out of sight, then turned to his squire and bade him bring another horse as quickly as he could. While he was waiting for it the wizard Merlin came along in the likeness of a boy, and asked the King why he was so thoughtful.

'I may well be thoughtful,' replied the King, 'for I have seen the most wonderful sight in all the world.'

'That I know well,' said Merlin, 'for I know all your thoughts. But it is folly to let your mind dwell on it, for thinking will mend nothing. I know, too, that Uther Pendragon was your father, and your mother was the Lady Igraine.'

'How can a boy like you know that?' cried Arthur, growing angry; but Merlin only answered, 'I know it better than any man living,' and passed, returning soon after in the likeness of an old man of fourscore, and sitting down by the well to rest.

'What makes you so sad?' asked he.

'I may well be sad,' replied Arthur, 'there is plenty to make me so. And besides, there was a boy here who told me things that he had no business to know, and among them the names of my father and mother.'

'He told you the truth,' said the old man, 'and if you would have listened he could have told you still more: how that your sister shall have a child who shall destroy you and all your Knights.'

'Who are you?' asked Arthur, wondering.

'I am Merlin, and it was I who came to you in the likeness of a boy. I know all things; how that you shall die a noble death, being slain in battle, while my end will be shameful, for I shall be put alive into the earth.'

There was no time to say more, for the man brought up the King's horse and he mounted, and rode fast till he came to Carlion.

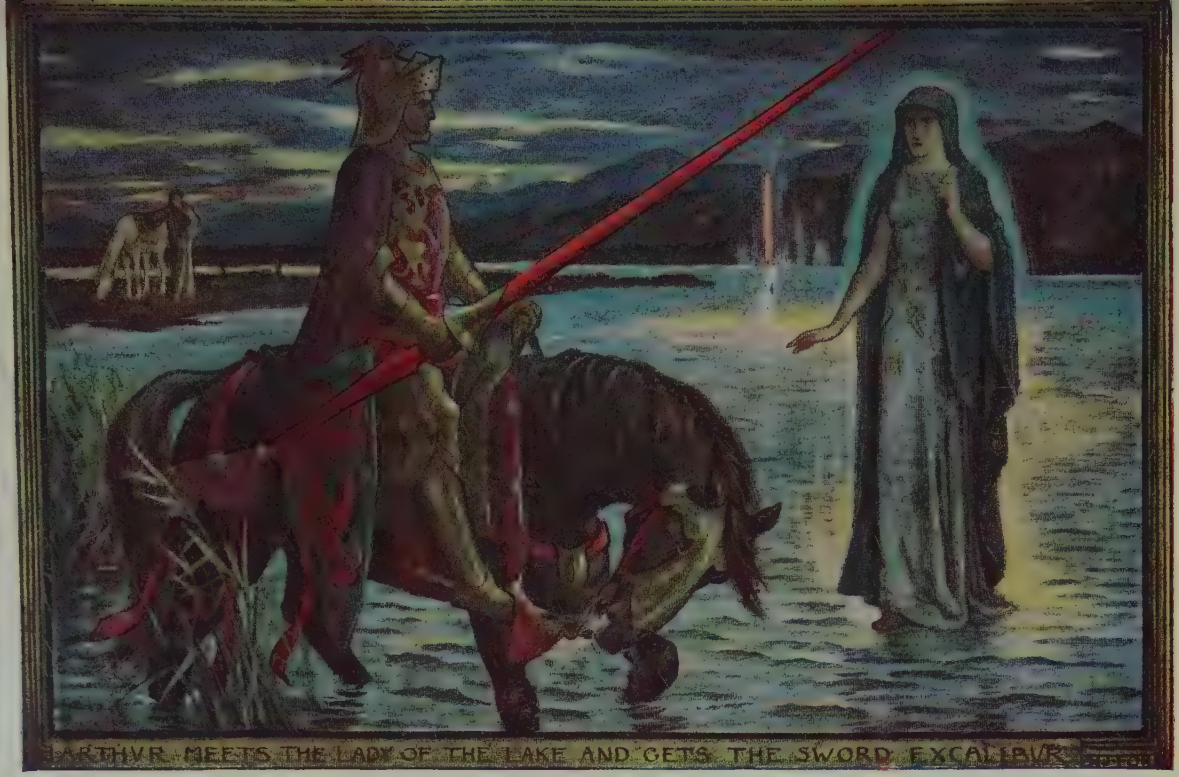
THE SWORD EXCALIBUR

King Arthur had fought a hard battle with the tallest Knight in all the land, and though he struck hard and well, he would have been slain had not Merlin enchanted the Knight and cast him into a deep sleep, and brought the King to a hermit who had studied the art of healing, and cured all his wounds in three days. Then Arthur and Merlin waited no longer, but gave the hermit thanks and departed.

As they rode together Arthur said, 'I have no sword,' but Merlin bade him be patient and he would soon give him one. In a little while they came to a large lake, and in the midst of the lake Arthur beheld an arm rising out of the water, holding up a sword. 'Look!' said Merlin, 'that is the sword I spoke of.' And the King looked again, and a maiden stood upon the water. 'That is the Lady of the Lake,' said Merlin, 'and she is coming to you, and if you ask her courteously she will give you the sword.' So when the maiden drew near Arthur saluted her and said, 'Maiden, I pray you tell me whose sword is that which an arm is holding out of the water? I wish it were mine, for I have lost my sword.'

'That sword is mine, King Arthur,' answered she, 'and I will give it to you, if you in return will give me a gift when I ask you.'

'By my faith,' said the King, 'I will give you whatever gift you ask.' 'Well,' said the maiden, 'get into the


ARTHVR MEETS THE LADY OF THE LAKE AND GETS THE SWORD EXCALIBVR

barge yonder, and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you.' For this was the sword Excalibur. 'As for *my* gift, I will ask it in my own time.' Then King Arthur and Merlin dismounted from their horses and tied them up safely, and went into the barge, and when they came to the place where the arm was holding the sword Arthur took it by the handle, and the arm disappeared. And they brought the sword back to land. As they rode the King looked lovingly on his sword, which Merlin saw, and, smiling, said, 'Which do you like best, the sword or the scabbard?' 'I like the sword,' answered Arthur. 'You are not wise to say that,' replied Merlin, 'for the scabbard is worth ten of the sword, and as long as it is buckled on you you will lose no blood, however sorely you may be wounded.' So they rode into the town of Carlion, and Arthur's Knights gave them a glad welcome, and said it was a joy to serve under a King who risked his life as much as any common man.

THE STORY OF SIR BALIN

In those days many Kings reigned in the Islands of the Sea, and they constantly waged war upon each other, and on their liege lord, and news came to Arthur that Ryons, King of North Wales, had collected a large host and had ravaged his lands and slain some of his people. When he heard this, Arthur rose in anger, and commanded that all lords, Knights, and gentlemen of arms should meet him at Camelot, where he would call a council, and hold a tourney.

From every part the Knights flocked to Camelot, and the town was full to overflowing of armed men and their horses. And when they were all assembled, there rode in a damsel, who said she had come with a message from the great Lady Lile of Avelion, and begged that they would bring her before King Arthur. When she was led into his presence she let her mantle of fur slip off her shoulders, and they saw that by her side a richly wrought sword was buckled. The King was silent with wonder at the strange sight, but at last he said, 'Damsel, why do you wear this sword? for swords are not the ornaments of women.' 'Oh, my lord,' answered she, 'I would I could find some Knight to rid me of this sword, which weighs me down and causes me much sorrow. But the man who will deliver me of it must be one who is mighty of his hands, and pure in his deeds, without villainy, or treason. If I find a Knight such as this, he will draw this sword out of its sheath,

and he only. For I have been at the Court of King Ryons, and he and his Knights tried with all their strength to draw the sword and they could not.'

'Let me see if I can draw it,' said Arthur, 'not because I think myself the best Knight, for well I know how far I am outdone by others, but to set them an example that they may follow me.' With that the King took the sword by the sheath and by the girdle, and pulled at it with all his force, but the sword stuck fast. 'Sir,' said the damsel, 'you need not pull half so hard, for he that shall pull it out shall do it with little strength.' 'It is not for me,' answered Arthur, 'and now, my Barons, let each man try his fortune.' So most of the Knights of the Round Table there present pulled, one after another, at the sword, but none could stir it from its sheath. 'Alas! alas!' cried the damsel in great grief, 'I thought to find in this Court Knights that were blameless and true of heart, and now I know not where to look for them.' 'By my faith,' said Arthur, 'there are no better Knights in the world than these of mine, but I am sore displeased that they cannot help me in this matter.'

Now at that time there was a poor Knight at Arthur's Court who had been kept prisoner for a year and a half because he had slain the King's cousin. He was of high birth and his name was Balin, and after he had suffered eighteen months the punishment of his misdeed the Barons prayed the King to set him free, which Arthur did willingly. When Balin, standing apart, beheld the Knights one by one try the sword, and fail to draw it, his heart beat fast, yet he shrank from taking his turn, for he was meanly dressed, and could not compare with the other Barons. But after the damsel had bid farewell to Arthur and his Court, and was setting out on her journey homewards, he called to her and said, 'Damsel, I pray you to suffer me to try your sword, as well as these lords, for though I am so poorly clothed, my heart is as high as theirs.' The damsel stopped and

looked at him, and answered, 'Sir, it is not needful to put you to such trouble, for where so many have failed it is hardly likely that you will succeed.' 'Ah! fair damsel,' said Balin, 'it is not fine clothes that make good deeds.' 'You speak truly,' replied the damsel, 'therefore do what you can.' Then Balin took the sword by the girdle and sheath, and pulled it out easily, and when he looked at the sword he was greatly pleased with it. The King and the Knights were dumb with surprise that it was Balin who had triumphed over them, and many of them envied him and felt anger towards him. 'In truth,' said the damsel, 'this is the best Knight that I ever found, but, Sir, I pray you give me the sword again.'

'No,' answered Balin, 'I will keep it till it is taken from me by force.' 'It is for your sake, not mine, that I ask for it,' said the damsel, 'for with that sword you shall slay the man you love best, and it shall bring about your own ruin.' 'I will take what befalls me,' replied Balin, 'but the sword I will not give up, by the faith of my body.' So the damsel departed in great sorrow. The next day Sir Balin left the Court, and, armed with his sword, set forth in search of adventures, which he found in many places where he had not thought to meet with them. In all the fights that he fought, Sir Balin was the victor, and Arthur, and Merlin his friend, knew that there was no Knight living of greater deeds, or more worthy of worship. And he was known to all as Sir Balin le Savage, the Knight of the two swords.

One day he was riding forth when at the turning of a road he saw a cross, and on it was written in letters of gold, 'Let no Knight ride towards this castle.' Sir Balin was still reading the writing when there came towards him an old man with white hair, who said, 'Sir Balin le Savage, this is not the way for you, so turn again and choose some other path.' And so he vanished, and a horn blew loudly, as a horn is blown at the death of a beast. 'That blast,' said Balin, 'is for me, but I am still

alive,' and he rode to the castle, where a great company of Knights and ladies met him and welcomed him, and

The Damsel Warns Sir Balin.

made him a feast. Then the lady of the castle said to him, 'Knight with the two swords, you must now fight a

Knight that guards an island, for it is our law that no man may leave us without he first fight a tourney.'

'That is a bad custom,' said Balin, 'but if I must I am ready; for though my horse is weary my heart is strong.'

'Sir,' said a Knight to him, 'your shield does not look whole to me; I will lend you another'; so Balin listened to him and took the shield that was offered, and left his own with his own coat of arms behind him. He rode down to the shore, and led his horse into a boat, which took them across. When he reached the other side, a damsel came to him crying, 'O Knight Balin, why have you left your own shield behind you? Alas! you have put yourself in great danger, for by your shield you should have been known. I grieve over your doom, for there is no man living that can rival you for courage and bold deeds.'

'I repent,' answered Balin, 'ever having come into this country, but for very shame I must go on. Whatever befalls me, either for life or death, I am ready to take it.' Then he examined his armour, and saw that it was whole, and mounted his horse.

As he went along the path he beheld a Knight come out of a castle in front, clothed in red, riding a horse with red trappings. When this red Knight looked on the two swords, he thought for a moment it was Balin, but the shield did not bear Balin's device. So they rode at each other with their spears, and smote each other's shields so hard that both horses and men fell to the ground with the shock, and the Knights lay unconscious on the ground for some minutes. But soon they rose up again and began the fight afresh, and they fought till the place was red with their blood, and they had each seven great wounds. 'What Knight are you?' asked Balin le Savage, pausing for breath, 'for never before have I found any Knight to match me.' 'My name,' said he, 'is Balan, brother to the good Knight Balin.'

The Death of Balin and Balan

'Alas!' cried Balin, 'that I should ever live to see this day,' and he fell back fainting to the ground. At this sight Balan crept on his feet and hands, and pulled off Balin's helmet, so that he might see his face. The fresh air revived Balin, and he awoke and said: 'O Balan, my brother, you have slain me, and I you, and the whole world shall speak ill of us both.'

'Alas,' sighed Balan, 'if I had only known you! I saw your two swords, but from your shield I thought you had been another Knight.'

'Woe is me!' said Balin, 'all this was wrought by an unhappy Knight in the castle, who caused me to change my shield for his. If I lived, I would destroy that castle that he should not deceive other men.'

'You would have done well,' answered Balan, 'for they have kept me prisoner ever since I slew a Knight that guarded this island, and they would have kept you captive too.' Then came the lady of the castle and her companions, and listened as they made their moan. And Balan prayed that she would grant them the grace to lie together, there where they died, and their wish was given them, and she and those that were with her wept for pity.

So they died; and the lady made a tomb for them, and put Balan's name alone on it, for Balin's name she knew not. But Merlin knew, and next morning he came and wrote it in letters of gold, and he ungirded Balin's sword, and unscrewed the pommel, and put another pommel on it, and bade a Knight that stood by handle it, but the Knight could not. At that Merlin laughed. 'Why do you laugh?' asked the Knight. 'Because,' said Merlin, 'no man shall handle this sword but the best Knight in the world, and that is either Sir Lancelot or his son Sir Galahad. With this sword Sir Lancelot shall slay the man he loves best, and Sir Gawaine is his name.' And this was later done, in a fight across the seas.

All this Merlin wrote on the pommel of the sword.

Next he made a bridge of steel to the island, six inches broad, and no man could pass over it that was guilty of any evil deeds. The scabbard of the sword he left on this side of the island, so that Galahad should find it. The sword itself he put in a magic stone, which floated down the stream to Camelot, that is now called Winchester. And the same day Galahad came to the river, having in his hand the scabbard, and he saw the sword and pulled it out of the stone, as is told in another place.

HOW THE ROUND TABLE BEGAN

It was told in the story of the Questing Beast that King Arthur married the daughter of Leodegrance, King of Cameliard, but there was not space there to say how it came about. And as the tales of the Round Table are full of this lady, Queen Guenevere, it is well that anybody who reads this book should learn how she became Queen.

After King Arthur had fought and conquered many enemies, he said one day to Merlin, whose counsel he took all the days of his life, 'My Barons will let me have no rest, but bid me take a wife, and I have answered them that I shall take none, except you advise me.'

'It is well,' replied Merlin, 'that you should take a wife, but is there any woman that you love better than another?' 'Yes,' said Arthur, 'I love Guenevere, daughter of Leodegrance, King of Cameliard, in whose house is the Round Table that my father gave him. This maiden is the fairest that I have ever seen, or ever shall see.' 'Sir,' answered Merlin, 'what you say as to her beauty is true, but, if your heart was not set on her, I could find you another as fair, and of more goodness, than she. But if a man's heart is once set it is idle to try to turn him.' Then Merlin asked the King to give him a company of Knights and esquires, that he might go to the Court of King Leodegrance and tell him that King Arthur desired to wed his daughter, which Arthur did gladly. Therefore Merlin rode forth and made all

the haste he could till he came to the Castle of Cameliard, and told King Leodegrance who had sent him and why.

'That is the best news I have ever had,' replied Leodegrance, 'for little did I think that so great and noble a King should seek to marry my daughter. As for lands to endow her with, I would give whatever he chose; but he has lands enough of his own, so I will give him instead something that will please him much more, the Round Table which Uther Pendragon gave me, where a hundred and fifty Knights can sit at one time. I myself can call to my side a hundred good Knights, but I lack fifty, for the wars have slain many, and some are absent.' And without more words King Leodegrance gave his consent that his daughter should wed King Arthur. And Merlin returned with his Knights and esquires, journeying partly by water and partly by land, till they drew near to London.

When King Arthur heard of the coming of Merlin and of the Knights with the Round Table he was filled with joy, and said to those that stood about him, 'This news that Merlin has brought me is welcome indeed, for I have long loved this fair lady, and the Round Table is dearer to me than great riches.' Then he ordered that Sir Lancelot should ride to fetch the Queen, and that preparations for the marriage and her coronation should be made, which was done. 'Now, Merlin,' said the King, 'go and look about my kingdom and bring fifty of the bravest and most famous Knights that can be found throughout the land.' But no more than eight and twenty Knights could Merlin find. With these Arthur had to be content, and the Bishop of Canterbury was fetched, and he blessed the seats that were placed by the Round Table, and the Knights sat in them. 'Fair Sirs,' said Merlin, when the Bishop had ended his blessing, 'arise all of you, and pay your homage to the King.' So the Knights arose to do his bidding, and in every seat was the name of the Knight who had sat on it, written in

letters of gold, but two seats were empty. After that young Gawaine came to the King, and prayed him to make him a Knight on the day that he should wed Guenevere. 'That I will gladly,' replied the King, 'for you are my sister's son.'

As the King was speaking, a poor man entered the Court, bringing with him a youth about eighteen years old, riding on a lean mare, though it was not the custom for gentlemen to ride on mares. 'Where is King Arthur?' asked the man. 'Yonder,' answered the Knights. 'Have you business with him?' 'Yes,' said the man, and he went and bowed low before the King: 'I have heard, O King Arthur, flower of Knights and Kings, that at the time of your marriage you would give any man the gift he should ask for.'

'That is truth,' answered the King, 'as long as I do no wrong to other men or to my kingdom.'

'I thank you for your gracious words,' said the poor man; 'the boon I would ask is that you would make my son a Knight.' 'It is a great boon to ask,' answered the King. 'What is your name?'

'Sir, my name is Aries the cowherd.'

'Is it you or your son that has thought of this honour?'

'It is my son who desires it, and not I,' replied the man. 'I have thirteen sons who tend cattle, and work in the fields if I bid them; but this boy will do nothing but shoot and cast darts, or go to watch battles and look on Knights, and all day long he beseeches me to bring him to you, that he may be knighted also.'

'What is your name?' said Arthur, turning to the young man.

'Sir, my name is Tor.'

'Where is your sword that I may knight you?' said the King.

'It is here, my lord.'

'Take it out of its sheath,' said the King, 'and

require me to make you a Knight.' Then Tor jumped off his mare and pulled out his sword, and knelt before the King, praying that he might be made a Knight and a Knight of the Round Table.

'As for a Knight, that I will make you,' said Arthur, smiting him in the neck with the sword, 'and if you are worthy of it you shall be Knight of the Round Table.' And the next day he made Gawaine Knight also.

MERLIN AND VIVIEN

THE PASSING OF MERLIN

Sir Tor proved before long by his gallant deeds that he was worthy to sit in one of the two empty seats of the Round Table. Many of the other Knights went out also in search of adventures, and one of them, Sir Pellinore, brought a damsel of the lake to Arthur's Court, and when Merlin saw her he fell in love with her, so that he desired to be always in her company. The damsel laughed in secret at Merlin, but made use of him to tell her all she would know, and the wizard had no strength to say her nay, though he knew what would come of it. For he told King Arthur that before long he should be put into the earth alive, for all his cunning. He likewise told the King many things that should befall him, and warned him always to keep the scabbard as well as the sword Excalibur, and foretold that both sword and scabbard should be stolen from him by a woman whom he most trusted. 'You will miss my counsel sorely,' added Merlin, 'and would give all your lands to have me back again.' 'But since you know what will happen,' said the King, 'you may surely guard against it.' 'No,' answered Merlin, 'that will not be.' So he departed from the King, and the maiden followed him whom some call Nimue and others Vivien, and wherever she went Merlin went also.

They journeyed together to many places, both at home and across the seas, and the damsel was wearied of him, and sought by every means to be rid of him, but he would not be shaken off. At last these two wandered back to

Cornwall, and one day Merlin showed Vivien a rock under which he said great marvels were hidden. Then Vivien put forth all her powers, and told Merlin how she longed to see the wonders beneath the stone, and, in spite of all his wisdom, Merlin listened to her and crept under the rock to bring forth the strange things that lay there. And when he was under the stone she used the magic he had taught her, and the rock rolled over him, and buried him alive, as he had told King Arthur. But the damsel departed with joy, and thought no more of him: now that she knew all the magic he could teach her.

HOW MORGAN LE FAY TRIED TO KILL KING ARTHUR

King Arthur had a sister called Morgan le Fay, who was skilled in magic of all sorts, and hated her brother because he had slain in battle a Knight whom she loved. But to gain her own ends, and to revenge herself upon the King, she kept a smiling face, and let none guess the passion in her heart.

One day Morgan le Fay went to Queen Guenevere, and asked her leave to go into the country. The Queen wished her to wait till Arthur returned, but Morgan le Fay said she had had bad news and could not wait. Then the Queen let her depart without delay.

Early next morning at break of day Morgan le Fay mounted her horse and rode all day and all night, and at noon next day reached the Abbey of nuns where King Arthur had gone to rest, for he had fought a hard battle, and for three nights had slept but little. 'Do not wake him,' said Morgan le Fay, who had come there knowing she would find him, 'I will rouse him myself when I think he has had enough sleep,' for she thought to steal his sword Excalibur from him. The nuns dared not disobey her, so Morgan le Fay went straight into the room where King Arthur was lying fast asleep in his bed, and in his right hand was grasped his sword Excalibur. When she beheld that sight, her heart fell, for she dared not touch the sword, knowing well that if Arthur waked and saw her she was a dead woman. So she took the scabbard, and went away on horseback.

When the King awoke and missed his scabbard, he was angry, and asked who had been there; and the nuns told him that it was his sister, Morgan le Fay, who had gone away with a scabbard under her mantle. 'Alas!' said Arthur, 'you have watched me badly!'

'Sir,' said they, 'we dared not disobey your sister.'

'Saddle the best horse that can be found,' commanded the King, 'and bid Sir Ontzlake take another and come with me.' And they buckled on their armour and rode after Morgan le Fay.

They had not gone far before they met a cowherd, and they stopped to ask if he had seen any lady riding that way. 'Yes,' said the cowherd, 'a lady passed by here, with forty horses behind her, and went into the forest yonder.' Then they galloped hard till Arthur caught sight of Morgan le Fay, who looked back, and, seeing that it was Arthur who gave chase, pushed on faster than before. And when she saw she could not escape him, she rode into a lake that lay in the plain on the edge of the forest, and, crying out, 'Whatever may befall me, my brother shall not have the scabbard,' she threw the scabbard far into the water, and it sank, for it was heavy with gold and jewels. After that she fled into a valley full of great stones, and turned herself and her men and her horses into blocks of marble. Scarcely had she done this when the King rode up, but seeing her nowhere thought some evil must have befallen her in vengeance for her misdeeds. He then sought high and low for the scabbard, but could not find it, so he returned unto the Abbey. When Arthur was gone, Morgan le Fay turned herself and her horses and her men back into their former shapes, and said, 'Now, Sirs, we may go where we will.' And she departed into the country of Gore, and made her towns and castles stronger than before, for she feared King Arthur greatly. Meanwhile King Arthur had rested himself at the Abbey, and afterwards he rode to Camelot, and was welcomed by

MORGAN LE FAY CASTS AWAY THE SCABBARD

his Queen and all his Knights. And when he told his adventures and how Morgan le Fay sought his death they longed to burn her for her treason.

The next morning there arrived a damsel at the Court with a message from Morgan le Fay, saying that she had sent the King her brother a rich mantle for a gift, covered with precious stones, and begged him to receive it and to forgive her in whatever she might have offended him. The King answered little, but the mantle pleased him, and he was about to throw it over his shoulders when the lady of the lake stepped forward, and begged that she might speak to him in private. 'What is it?' asked the King. 'Say on here, and fear nothing.' 'Sir,' said the lady, 'do not put on this mantle, or suffer your Knights to put it on, till the bringer of it has worn it in your presence.' 'Your words are wise,' answered the King, 'I will do as you counsel me. Damsel, I desire you to put on this mantle that you have brought me, so that I may see it.' 'Sir,' said she, 'it does not become me to wear a King's garment.' 'By my head,' cried Arthur, 'you shall wear it before I put it on my back, or on the back of any of my Knights,' and he signed to them to put it on her, and she fell down dead, burnt to ashes by the enchanted mantle. Then the King was filled with anger, more than he was before, that his sister should have dealt so wickedly by him.

WHAT BEAUMAINS ASKED OF THE KING

As Pentecost drew near King Arthur commanded that all the Knights of the Round Table should keep the feast at a city called Kin-Kenadon, hard by the sands of Wales, where there was a great castle. Now it was the King's custom that he would eat no food on the day of Pentecost, which we call Whitsunday, until he had heard or seen some great marvel. So on that morning Sir Gawaine was looking from the window a little before noon when he espied three men on horseback, and with them a dwarf on foot, who held their horses when they alighted. Then Sir Gawaine went to the King and said, 'Sir, go to your food, for strange adventures are at hand.' And Arthur called the other Kings that were in the castle, and all the Knights of the Round Table that were a hundred and fifty, and they sat down to dine. When they were seated there entered the hall two men well and richly dressed; and upon their shoulders leaned the handsomest young man that ever was seen of any of them, higher than the other two by a cubit. He was wide in the chest and large handed, but his great height seemed to be a burden and a shame to him, therefore it was he leaned on the shoulders of his friends. As soon as Arthur beheld him he made a sign, and without more words all three went up to the high daïs, where the King sat. Then the tall young man stood up straight, and said: 'King Arthur, God bless you and all your fair fellowship, and in especial the fellowship of the Table Round. I have come hither to pray you to give me three gifts, which you can grant

me honourably, for they will do no hurt to you or to anyone.' 'Ask,' answered Arthur, 'and you shall have your asking.'

'Sir, this is my petition for this feast, for the other two I will ask after. Give me meat and drink for this one twelvemonth.' 'Well,' said the King, 'you shall have meat and drink enough, for that I give to every man, whether friend or foe. But tell me your name!'

'I cannot tell you that,' answered he. 'That is strange,' replied the King, 'but you are the goodliest young man I ever saw,' and, turning to Sir Kay, the steward, charged him to give the young man to eat and drink of the best, and to treat him in all ways as if he were a lord's son. 'There is little need to do that,' answered Sir Kay, 'for if he had come of gentlemen and not of peasants he would have asked of you a horse and armour. But as the birth of a man is so are his requests. And seeing he has no name I will give him one, and it shall be Beaumains, or Fair-hands, and he shall sit in the kitchen and eat broth, and at the end of a year he shall be as fat as any pig that feeds on acorns.' So the young man was left in charge of Sir Kay, that scorned and mocked him.

Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawaine were wroth when they heard what Sir Kay said, and bade him leave off his mocking, for they believed the youth would turn out to be a man of great deeds; but Sir Kay paid no heed to them, and took him down to the great hall, and set him among the boys and lads, where he ate sadly. After he had finished eating both Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawaine bade him come to their room, and would have had him eat and drink there, but he refused, saying he was bound to obey Sir Kay, into whose charge the King had given him. So he was put into the kitchen by Sir Kay, and slept nightly with the kitchen boys. This he bore for a whole year, and was always mild and gentle, and gave hard words to no one. Only, whenever the

Knights played at tourney he would steal out and watch them. And Sir Lancelot gave him gold to spend, and clothes to wear, and so did Gawaine. Also, if there were any games held whereat he might be, none could throw a bar nor cast a stone as far as he by two good yards.

Thus the year passed by till the feast of Whitsuntide came again, and this time the King held it at Carlion. But King Arthur would eat no meat at Whitsuntide till some adventures were told him, and glad was he when a squire came and said to him, 'Sir, you may go to your food, for here is a damsel with some strange tales.' At this the damsel was led into the hall, and bowed low before the King, and begged he would give her help. 'For whom?' asked the King, 'and what is the adventure?' 'Sir,' answered she, 'my sister is a noble lady of great fame, who is besieged by a tyrant, and may not get out of her castle. And it is because your Knights are said to be the noblest in all the world that I came to you for aid.' 'What is your sister's name, and where does she dwell? And who is the man that besieges her, and where does he come from?' 'Sir King,' answered she, 'as for my sister's name, I cannot tell it you now, but she is a lady of great beauty and goodness, and of many lands. As for the tyrant who besieges her, he is called the Red Knight of the Red Lawns.' 'I know nothing of him,' said the King. 'But I know him,' cried Sir Gawaine, 'and he is one of the most dangerous Knights in the world. Men say he has the strength of seven, and once when we had crossed swords I hardly escaped from him with my life.' 'Fair damsel,' then said the King, 'there are many Knights here who would go gladly to the rescue of your lady, but none of them shall do so with my consent unless you will tell us her name, and the place of her castle.' 'Then I must speak further,' said the damsel. But before she had made answer to the King up came Beaumains, and spoke to Arthur, saying, 'Sir King, I thank you that for this whole year I have lived in your

kitchen, and had meat and drink, and now I will ask you for the two gifts that you promised me on this day.' 'Ask them,' answered the King. 'Sir, this shall be my two gifts. First grant me the adventure of this damsel, for it is mine by right.' 'You shall have it,' said the King. 'Then, Sir, you shall bid Sir Lancelot du Lake to make me Knight, for I will receive knighthood at the hands of no other.' 'All this shall be done,' said the King. 'Fie on you,' cried the damsel, 'will you give me none but a kitchen boy to rescue my lady?' and she went away in a rage, and mounted her horse.

No sooner had she left the hall than a page came to Beaumains and told him that a horse and fair armour had been brought for him, also there had arrived a dwarf carrying all things that a Knight needed. And when he was armed there were few men that were handsomer than he, and the Court wondered greatly whence these splendid trappings had come. Then Beaumains came into the hall, and took farewell of the King, and Sir Gawaine and Sir Lancelot, and prayed Sir Lancelot that he would follow after him. So he departed, and rode after the damsel. Many looked upon him and marvelled at the strength of his horse, and its golden trappings, and envied Beaumains his shining coat of mail; but they noted that he had neither shield nor spear. 'I will ride after him,' laughed Sir Kay, 'and see if my kitchen boy will own me for his better.' 'Leave him and stay at home,' said Sir Gawaine and Sir Lancelot, but Sir Kay would not listen and sprang upon his horse. Just as Beaumains came up with the damsel, Sir Kay reached Beaumains, and said, 'Beaumains, do you not know me?'

Beaumains turned and looked at him, and answered, 'Yes, I know you for an ill-mannered Knight, therefore beware of me.' At this Sir Kay put his spear in rest and charged him, and Beaumains drew his sword and charged Sir Kay, and dashed aside the spear, and thrust

him through the side, till Sir Kay fell down as if he had been dead, and Beaumains took his shield and spear for himself. Then he sprang on his own horse, bidding first his dwarf take Sir Kay's horse, and rode away. All this was seen by Sir Lancelot, who had followed him, and also by the damsel. In a little while Beaumains stopped, and asked Sir Lancelot if he would tilt with him, and they came together with such a shock that both the horses and their riders fell to the earth and were bruised sorely. Sir Lancelot was the first to rise, and he helped Beaumains from his horse, and Beaumains threw his shield from him, and offered to fight on foot. And they rushed together like wild boars, turning and thrusting and parrying for the space of an hour, and Sir Lancelot marvelled at the young man's strength, and thought he was more like a giant than a Knight, and dreading lest he himself should be put to shame, he said: 'Beaumains, do not fight so hard, we have no quarrel that forbids us to leave off.' 'That is true,' answered Beaumains, laying down his arms, 'but it does me good, my lord, to feel your might.' 'Well, said Sir Lancelot, 'I promise you I had much ado to save myself from you unshamed, therefore have no fear of any other Knight.' 'Do you think I could really stand against a proved Knight?' asked Beaumains. 'Yes,' said Lancelot, 'if you fight as you have fought to-day I will be your warrant against anyone.' 'Then I pray you,' cried Beaumains, 'give me the order of knighthood.' 'You must first tell me your name,' replied Lancelot, 'and who are your kindred.' 'You will not betray me if I do?' asked Beaumains. 'No, that I will never do, till it is openly known,' said Lancelot. 'Then, Sir, my name is Gareth, and Sir Gawaine is my brother.' 'Ah, Sir,' cried Lancelot, 'I am gladder of you than ever I was, for I was sure you came of good blood, and that you did not come to the Court for meat and drink only.' And he bade him kneel, and gave him the order of knighthood.

Faugh Sir! You smell of Ye Kitchen
Gareth & Linet

After that Sir Gareth wished to go his own ways, and departed. When he was gone, Sir Lancelot went back to Sir Kay and ordered some men that were by to bear him home on a shield, and in time his wounds were healed; but he was scorned of all men, and especially of Sir Gawaine and Sir Lancelot, who told him it was no good deed to treat any young man so, and no one could tell what his birth might be, or what had brought him to the Court.

Then Beaumains rode after the damsel, who stopped when she saw him coming. 'What are you doing here?' said she. 'Your clothes smell of the grease and tallow of the kitchen! Do you think to change my heart towards you because of yonder Knight whom you slew? No, truly! I know well who you are, you turner of spits! Go back to King Arthur's kitchen, which is your proper place.' 'Damsel,' replied Beaumains, 'you may say to me what you will, but I shall not quit you whatever you may do, for I have vowed to King Arthur to relieve the lady in the castle, and I shall set her free or die fighting for her.' 'Fie on you, Scullion,' answered she. 'You will meet with one who will make you such a welcome that you would give all the broth you ever cooked never to have seen his face.' 'I shall do my best to fight him,' said Beaumains, and held his peace.

Soon they entered the wood, and there came a man flying towards them, galloping with all his might. 'Oh, help! help! lord,' cried he, 'for my master lies in a thicket, bound by six thieves, and I greatly fear they will slay him.' 'Show me the way,' said Sir Beaumains, and they rode together till they reached the place where the Knight lay bound. Then Sir Beaumains charged the six thieves, and struck one dead, and another, and another still, and the other three fled, not liking the battle. Sir Beaumains pursued them till they turned at bay, and fought hard for their lives; but in the end Sir Beaumains slew them, and

returned to the Knight and unbound him. The Knight thanked Beaumains heartily for his deliverance, and prayed him to come to his castle, where he would reward him. 'Sir,' said Beaumains, 'I was this day made Knight by noble Sir Lancelot, and that is reward enough for anything I may do. Besides, I must follow this damsel.' But when he came near her she reviled him as before, and bade him ride far from her. 'Do you think I set store by what you have done? You will soon see a sight that will make you tell a very different tale.' At this the Knight whom Beaumains had rescued rode up to the damsel, and begged that she would rest in his castle that night, as the sun was now setting. The damsel agreed, and the Knight ordered a great supper, and gave Sir Beaumains a seat above the seat of the damsel, who rose up in anger. 'Fie! fie! Sir Knight,' cried she, 'you are uncourteous to set a mere kitchen page before me; he is not fit to be in the company of high-born people.' Her words struck shame into the Knight, and he took Beaumains and set him at a side table, and seated himself before him.

In the early morning Sir Beaumains and the damsel bade farewell to the Knight, and rode through the forest till they came to a great river, where stood two Knights on the further side, guarding the passage. 'Well, what do you say now?' asked the damsel. 'Will you fight them or turn back?' 'I would not turn if there were six more of them,' answered Sir Beaumains, and he rushed into the water and so did one of the Knights. They came together in the middle of the stream, and their spears broke in two with the force of the charge, and they drew their swords, hitting hard at each other. At length Sir Beaumains dealt the other Knight such a blow that he fell from his horse, and was drowned in the river. Then Beaumains put his horse at the bank, where the second Knight was waiting for him, and they fought long together, till Sir Beaumains clave his helmet in two.

LINET AND THE BLACK KNIGHT

So he left him dead, and rode after the damsel. 'Alas!' she cried, 'that even a kitchen page should have power to destroy two such Knights! You think you have done mighty things, but you are wrong! As to the first Knight, his horse stumbled, and he was drowned before you ever touched him. And the other you took from behind, and struck him when he was defenceless.' 'Damsel!' answered Beaumains, 'you may say what you will, I care not what it is, so I may deliver this lady.' 'Fie, foul kitchen knave, you shall see Knights that will make you lower your crest.' 'I pray you be more civil in your language,' answered Beaumains, 'for it matters not to me what Knights they be, I will do battle with them.' 'I am trying to turn you back for your own good,' answered she, 'for if you follow me you are certainly a dead man, as well I know all you have won before has been by luck.' 'Say what you will, damsel,' said he, 'but where you go I will follow you,' and they rode together till eventide, and all the way she chid him and gave him no rest.

At length they reached an open space where there was a black lawn, and on the lawn a black hawthorn, whereon hung a black banner on one side, and a black shield and spear, big and long, on the other. Close by stood a black horse covered with silk, fastened to a black stone. A Knight, covered with black armour, sat on the horse, and when she saw him the damsel bade him ride away, as his horse was not saddled. But the Knight drew near and said to her, 'Damsel, have you brought this Knight from King Arthur's Court to be your champion?' 'No, truly,' answered she, 'this is but a kitchen boy, fed by King Arthur for charity.' 'Then why is he clad in armour?' asked the Knight; 'it is a shame that he should even bear you company.' 'I cannot be rid of him,' said she, 'he rides with me against my will. I would that you were able to deliver me from him! Either slay him or frighten him off, for by ill fortune he has this

day slain the two Knights of the passage.' 'I wonder much,' said the Black Knight, 'that any man who is well born should consent to fight with him.' 'They do not know him,' replied the damsel, 'and they think he must be a famous Knight because he rides with me.' 'That may be,' said the Black Knight, 'but he is well made, and looks likely to be a strong man; still I promise you I will just throw him to the ground, and take away his horse and armour, for it would be a shame to me to do more.' When Sir Beaumains heard him talk thus he looked up and said, 'Sir Knight, you are lightly disposing of my horse and armour, but I would have you know that I will pass this lawn, against your will or not, and you will only get my horse and armour if you win them in fair fight. Therefore let me see what you can do.' 'Say you so?' answered the Knight, 'now give up the lady at once, for it ill becomes a kitchen page to ride with a lady of high degree.' 'It is a lie,' said Beaumains, 'I am a gentleman born, and my birth is better than yours, as I will prove upon your body.'

With that they drew back their horses so as to charge each other hotly, and for the space of an hour and a half they fought fiercely and well, but in the end a blow from Beaumains threw the Knight from his horse, and he swooned and died. Then Beaumains jumped down, and seeing that the Knight's horse and armour were better than his own, he took them for himself, and rode after the damsel. While they were thus riding together, and the damsel was chiding him as ever she did, they saw a Knight coming towards them dressed all in green. 'Is that my brother the Black Knight who is with you?' asked he of the damsel. 'No, indeed,' she replied, 'this unhappy kitchen knave has slain your brother, to my great sorrow.' 'Alas!' sighed the Green Knight, 'that my brother should die so meanly at the hand of a kitchen knave. Traitor!' he added, turning to Beaumains, 'thou shalt die for slaying my brother, for he

was a noble Knight, and his name was Sir Percard.' 'I defy you,' said Beaumains, 'for I slew him as a good Knight should.'

Then the Green Knight seized a horn which hung from a horn tree, and blew three notes upon it, and two damsels came and armed him, and fastened on him a green shield and a green spear. So the fight began and raged long, first on horseback and then on foot, till both were sore wounded. At last the damsel came and stood beside them, and said, 'My lord the Green Knight, why for very shame do you stand so long fighting a kitchen knave? You ought never to have been made a Knight at all!' These scornful words stung the heart of the Green Knight, and he dealt a mighty stroke which cleft asunder the shield of Beaumains. And when Beaumains saw this, he struck a blow upon the Knight's helmet which brought him to his knees, and Beaumains leapt on him, and dragged him to the ground. Then the Green Knight cried for mercy, and offered to yield himself prisoner unto Beaumains. 'It is all in vain,' answered Beaumains, 'unless the damsel prays me for your life,' and therewith he unlaced his helmet as though he would slay him. 'Fie upon thee, false kitchen page!' said the damsel, 'I will never pray to save his life, for I am sure he is in no danger.' 'Suffer me not to die,' entreated the Knight, 'when a word may save me!' 'Fair Knight,' he went on, turning to Beaumains, 'save my life, and I will forgive you the death of my brother, and will do you service for ever, and will bring thirty of my Knights to serve you likewise.' 'It is a shame,' cried the damsel, 'that such a kitchen knave should have you and thirty Knights besides.' 'Sir Knight,' said Beaumains, 'I care nothing for all this, but if I am to spare your life the damsel must ask for it,' and he stepped forward as if to slay him. 'Let be, foul knave,' then said the damsel, 'do not slay him. If you do, you will repent it.' 'Damsel,' answered Beaumains, 'it is a

pleasure to me to obey you, and at your wish I will save his life. Sir Knight with the green arms, I release you at the request of this damsel, and I will fulfil all she charges me.'

Then the Green Knight kneeled down, and did him homage with his sword. 'I am sorry,' said the damsel, 'for the wounds you have received, and for your brother's death, for I had great need of you both, and have much dread of passing the forest.' 'Fear nothing,' answered the Green Knight, 'for this evening you shall lodge in my house, and to-morrow I will show you the way through the forest.' And they went with the Green Knight. But the damsel did not mend her ways with Beaumains, and ever more reviled him, till the Green Knight rebuked her, saying Beaumains was the noblest Knight that held a spear, and that in the end she would find he had sprung from some great King. And the Green Knight summoned the thirty Knights who did him service, and bade them henceforth do service to Beaumains, and keep him from treachery, and when he had need of them they would be ready to obey his orders. So they bade each other farewell, and Beaumains and the damsel rode forth anew. In like manner did Sir Beaumains overcome the Red Knight, who was the third brother, and the Red Knight cried for mercy, and offered to bring sixty Knights to do him service, and Beaumains spared his life at the request of the damsel, and likewise it so happened to Sir Persant of Inde.

And this time the damsel prayed Beaumains to give up the fight, saying, 'Sir, I wonder who you are and of what kindred you have come. Boldly you speak, and boldly you have done; therefore I pray you to depart and save yourself while you may, for both you and your horse have suffered great fatigues, and I fear we delay too long, for the besieged castle is but seven miles from this place, and all the perils are past save this one only. I dread sorely lest you

should get some hurt; yet this Sir Persant of Inde is nothing in might to the Knight who has laid siege to my lady.' But Sir Beaumains would not listen to her words, and vowed that by two hours after noon he would have overthrown him, and that it would still be daylight when they reached the castle. 'What sort of a man can you be?' answered the damsel, looking at him in wonder, 'for never did a woman treat a Knight as ill and shamefully as I have done you, while you have always been gentle and courteous to me, and no one bears himself like that save he who is of noble blood.' 'Damsel,' replied Beaumains, 'your hard words only drove me to strike the harder, and though I ate in King Arthur's kitchen, perhaps I might have had as much food as I wanted elsewhere. But all I have done was to make proof of my friends, and whether I am a gentleman or not, fair damsel, I have done you gentleman's service, and may perchance do you greater service before we part from each other.' 'Alas, fair Beaumains, forgive me all that I have said and done against you.' 'With all my heart,' he answered, 'and since you are pleased now to speak good words to me, know that I hear them gladly, and there is no Knight living but I feel strong enough to meet him.'

So Beaumains conquered Sir Persant of Inde, who brought a hundred Knights to be sworn into his service, and the next morning the damsel led him to the castle, where the Red Knight of the Red Lawn held fast the lady. 'Heaven defend you,' cried Sir Persant, when they told him where they were going; 'that is the most perilous Knight now living, for he has the strength of seven men. He has done great wrong to that lady, who is one of the fairest in all the world, and it seems to me as if this damsel must be her sister. Is not her name Linet?' 'Yes, Sir,' answered she, 'and my lady my sister's name is dame Lyonesse.' 'The Red Knight has drawn out the siege for two years,' said Sir Persant,

'though he might have forced an entrance many a time, but he hoped that Sir Lancelot du Lake or Sir Tristram or Sir Gawaine should come to do battle with him.' 'My Lord Sir Persant of Inde,' said the damsel, 'I bid you knight this gentleman before he fight with the Red Knight.' 'That I will gladly,' replied Sir Persant, 'if it please him to take the order of knighthood from so simple a man as I am.' 'Sir,' answered Beaumains, 'I thank you for your goodwill, but at the beginning of this quest I was made a Knight by Sir Lancelot. My name is Sir Gareth of Orkney and Sir Gawaine is my brother, though neither he nor King Arthur, whose sister is my mother, knows of it. I pray you to keep it close also.'

Now word was brought unto the besieged lady by the dwarf that her sister was coming to her with a Knight sent by King Arthur. And when the lady heard all that Beaumains had done, and how he had overthrown all who stood in his way, she bade her dwarf take baked venison, and fat capons, and two silver flagons of wine and a gold cup, and put them into the hands of a hermit that dwelt in a hermitage close by. The dwarf did so, and the lady then sent him to greet her sister and Sir Beaumains, and to beg them to eat and drink in the hermit's cell, and rest themselves, which they did. When they drew near the besieged castle Sir Beaumains saw full forty Knights, with spurs on their heels and swords in their hands, hanging from the tall trees that stood upon the lawn. 'Fair Sir,' said the damsel, 'these Knights came hither to rescue my sister, dame Lyonesse; and if you cannot overthrow the Knight of the Red Lawn, you will hang there too.'

'Truly,' answered Beaumains, 'it is a marvel that none of King Arthur's Knights has dealt with the Knight of the Red Lawn ere this'; and they rode up to the castle, which had round it high walls and deep ditches, till they came to a great sycamore tree, where hung a

The Lady of Lyonesse sees Sir Gareth

horn. And whoso desired to do battle with the Red Knight must blow that horn loudly.

'Sir, I pray you,' said Linet, as Beaumains bent forward to seize it, 'do not blow it till it is full noontide, for during three hours before that the Red Knight's strength so increases that it is as the strength of seven men; but when noon is come, he has the might of one man only.'

'Ah! for shame, damsel, to say such words. I will fight him as he is, or not at all,' and Beaumains blew such a blast that it rang through the castle. And the Red Knight buckled on his armour, and came to where Beaumains stood. So the battle began, and a fierce one it was, and much ado had Beaumains to last out till noon, when the Red Knight's strength began to wane; they rested, and came on again, and in the end the Red Knight yielded to Sir Beaumains, and the lords and Barons in the castle did homage to the victor, and begged that the Red Knight's life might be spared on condition they all took service with Beaumains. This was granted to them, and Linet bound up his wounds and put ointment on them, and so she did likewise to Sir Beaumains. But the Red Knight was sent to the Court of King Arthur, and told him all that Sir Beaumains had done. And King Arthur and his Knights marvelled.

Now Sir Beaumains had looked up at the windows of Castle Perilous before the fight, and had seen the face of the Lady Lyonesse, and had thought it the fairest in all the world. After he had subdued the Red Knight, he hasted into the castle, and the Lady Lyonesse welcomed him, and he told her he had bought her love with the best blood in his body. And she did not say him nay, but put him off for a time. Then the King sent letters to her to bid her, and likewise Sir Gareth, come to his Court, and by the counsel of Sir Gareth she prayed the King to let her call a tournament, and to proclaim that the Knight who bore himself best should, if he was unwedded, take her and all her lands. But if he had a wife already

he should be given a white ger-falcon, and for his wife a crown of gold, set about with precious stones.

So the Lady Lyonesse did as Sir Gareth had counselled her, and answered King Arthur that where Sir Gareth was she could not tell, but that if the King would call a tourney he might be sure that Sir Gareth would come to it. 'It is well thought of,' said Arthur, and the Lady Lyonesse departed unto Castle Perilous, and summoned all her Knights around her, and told them what she had done, and how they were to make ready to fight in the tournament. She began at once to set her castle in order, and to think what she should do with the great array of Knights that would ride hither from the furthest parts — from Scotland and Wales and Cornwall — and to lodge fitly the Kings, Dukes, Earls, and Barons that should come with Arthur. Queen Guenevere also she awaited, and the Queen of Orkney, Sir Gareth's mother. But Sir Gareth entreated the Lady Lyonesse and those Knights that were in the castle with him not to let his name be known, and this they agreed to.

'Sir Gareth,' said dame Lyonesse, 'I will lend you a ring, which I beseech you for the love you bear me to give me back when the tournament is done, for without it I have but little beauty. This ring is like no other ring, it will turn green red, and blue white, and the bearer shall lose no blood, however sore he may be wounded.'

'Truly, my own lady,' answered Sir Gareth, 'this ring will serve me well, and by its help I shall not fear that any man shall know me.' And Sir Gringamore, brother to the Lady Lyonesse, gave him a bay horse, and strong armour, and a sharp sword that had once belonged to his father. On the morning of the fifteenth of August, when the Feast of the Assumption was kept, the King commanded his heralds to blow loudly their trumpets, so that every Knight might know that he must enter the lists. It was a noble sight to see them flocking clad in shining armour, each man with his device upon his shield. And

the heralds marked who bare them best, and who were overthrown. All marvelled as to who the Knight could be whose armour sometimes seemed green, and sometimes white, but no man knew it was Sir Gareth. And whosoever Sir Gareth tilted with was straightway overthrown. 'Of a truth,' cried King Arthur, 'that Knight with the many colours is a good Knight,' and he called Sir Lancelot and bade him to challenge that Knight to combat. But Sir Lancelot said that though the Knight had come off victor in every fight, yet his limbs must be weary, for he had fought as a man fights under the eyes of his lady, 'and for this day,' said Sir Lancelot, 'he shall have the honour. Though it lay in my power to put it from him, I would not.'

Then they paused for a while to rest, and afterwards the tournament began again more fiercely than before, and Sir Lancelot was set upon by two Knights at once. When Sir Gareth saw that, he rode in between them, but no stroke would he deal Sir Lancelot, which Sir Lancelot noted, and guessed that it was the good Knight, Sir Gareth. Sir Gareth went hither and thither, smiting anyone that came in his way, and by fortune he met with his brother Sir Gawaine, and knocked off his helmet. Now it happened that while he was fighting a Knight dealt Sir Gareth a fierce blow on his helm, and he rode off the field to mend it. Then his dwarf, who had been watching eagerly, cried out to Sir Gareth to leave the ring with him, lest he should lose it while he was drinking, which Sir Gareth did; and when he had drunk and mended his helm he forgot the ring, at which the dwarf was glad, for he knew his name could no longer be hid. And when Sir Gareth returned to the field, his armour shone yellow like gold, and King Arthur marvelled what Knight he was, for he saw by his hair that he was the same Knight who had worn the many colours. 'Go,' he said to his heralds, 'ride near him and see what manner of Knight he is, for none can tell me his name.' So a herald drew close to

him, and saw that on his helm was written in golden letters 'This helm belongs to Sir Gareth of Orkney'; and the herald cried out and made proclamation, and the Kings and Knights pressed to behold him. And when Sir Gareth saw he was discovered, he struck more fiercely than before, and smote down Sir Sagramore, and his brother, Sir Gawaine. 'O brother,' said Sir Gawaine, 'I did not think you would have smitten me!' When Sir Gareth heard him say that he rode out of the press, and cried to his dwarf, 'Boy, you have played me foul, for you have kept my ring. Give it to me now, that I may hide myself,' and he galloped swiftly into the forest, and no one knew where he had gone. 'What shall I do next?' asked he of the dwarf. 'Sir,' answered the dwarf, 'send the Lady Lyonesse back her ring.' 'Your counsel is good,' said Gareth; 'take it to her, and commend me to her grace, and say I will come when I may, and bid her to be faithful to me, as I am to her.' After that Sir Gareth rode deeper into the forest.

Though Sir Gareth had left the tournament he found that there were as many fights awaiting him as if he had remained there. He overcame all his foes, and sent them and their followers to do homage to King Arthur, but he himself stayed behind. He was standing alone after they had gone, when he beheld an armed Knight coming towards him. Sir Gareth sprang on his horse, and without a word the two crashed together like thunder, and strove hard for two hours, till the ground was wet with blood. At that time the damsel Linet came riding by, and saw what was doing, and knew who were the fighters. And she cried, 'Sir Gawaine, Sir Gawaine, leave fighting with your brother Sir Gareth.' Then he threw down his shield and sword, and ran to Sir Gareth, and first took him in his arms and next kneeled down and asked mercy of him. 'Why do you, who were but now so strong and mighty, so suddenly yield to me?' asked Sir Gareth, who had not perceived the damsel. 'O Gareth, I am your brother, and

have had much sorrow for your sake.' At this Sir Gareth unlaced his helm and knelt before Sir Gawaine, and they rose and embraced each other. 'Ah, my fair brother,' said Sir Gawaine, 'I ought rightly to do you homage, even if you were not my brother, for in this twelvemonth you have sent King Arthur more Knights than any six of the best men of the Round Table.' While he was speaking there came the Lady Linet, and healed the wounds of Sir Gareth and of Sir Gawaine. 'What are you going to do now?' asked she. 'It is time that King Arthur had tidings of you both, and your horses are not fit to bear you.'

'Ride, I pray you,' said Sir Gawaine, 'to my uncle, King Arthur, who is but two miles away, and tell him what adventure has befallen me.' So she mounted her mule, and when she had told her tale to King Arthur, he bade them saddle him a palfrey and invited all the Knights and ladies of his Court to ride with him. When they reached the place they saw Sir Gareth and Sir Gawaine sitting on the hill-side. The King jumped off his horse, and would have greeted them, but he swooned away for gladness, and they ran and comforted him, and also their mother.

The two Knights stayed in King Arthur's Court for eight days, and rested themselves and grew strong. Then said the King to Linet, 'I wonder that your sister, dame Lyonesse, does not come here to visit me, or more truly to visit my nephew, Sir Gareth, who has worked so hard to win her love.'

'My lord,' answered Linet, 'you must, by your grace, hold her excused, for she does not know that Sir Gareth is here.'

'Go and fetch her, then,' said Arthur.

'That I will do quickly,' replied Linet, and by the next morning she had brought dame Lyonesse, and her brother Sir Gringamore, and forty Knights, but among the ladies dame Lyonesse was the fairest, save only Queen

Guenevere. They were all welcomed of King Arthur, who turned to his nephew Sir Gareth and asked him whether he would have that lady to his wife.

'My lord,' replied Sir Gareth, 'you know well that I love her above all the ladies in the world.'

'And what say you, fair lady?' asked the King.

'Most noble King,' said dame Lyonesse, 'I would sooner have Sir Gareth as my husband than any King or Prince that may be christened, and if I may not have him I promise you I will have none. For he is my first love, and shall be my last. And if you will suffer him to have his will and choice, I dare say he will have me.'

'That is truth,' said Sir Gareth.

'What, nephew,' cried the King, 'sits the wind in that door? Then you shall have all the help that is in my power,' and so said Gareth's mother. And it was fixed that the marriage should be at Michaelmas, at Kin-Kenadon by the sea-shore, and thus it was proclaimed in all places of the realm. Then Sir Gareth sent his summons to all the Knights and ladies that he had won in battle that they should be present, and he gave a rich ring to the Lady Lyonesse, and she gave him one likewise. And before she departed she had from King Arthur a shining golden bee, as a token. After that Sir Gareth set her on her way towards her castle, and returned unto the King. But he would ever be in Sir Lancelot's company, for there was no Knight that Sir Gareth loved so well as Sir Lancelot. The days drew fast to Michaelmas, and there came the Lady Lyonesse with her sister Linet and her brother Sir Gringamore to Kin-Kenadon by the sea, and there were they lodged by order of King Arthur. And upon Michaelmas Day the Bishop of Canterbury wedded Sir Gareth and the Lady Lyonesse with great ceremonies, and King Arthur commanded that Sir Gawaine should be joined to the damsel Linet, and Sir Agrawaine to the niece of dame Lyonesse, whose name was Laurel. Then the Knights whom Sir

Gareth had won in battle came with their followings and did homage to him, and the Green Knight besought him that he might act as chamberlain at the feast, and the Red Knight that he might be his steward. As soon as the feast was ended, they had all manner of minstrelsy and games and a great tournament that lasted three days, but at the prayer of dame Lyonesse the King would not suffer that any man who was wedded should fight at that feast.

THE QUEST OF THE HOLY GRAAL

This is a mysterious part of the adventures of King Arthur's Knights. We must remember that parts of these stories are very old; they were invented by the heathen Welsh, or by the ancient Britons, from whom the Welsh are descended, and by the old pagan Irish, who spoke Gaelic, a language not very unlike Welsh. Then these ancient stories were translated by French and other foreign writers, and Christian beliefs and chivalrous customs were added in the French romances, and, finally, the French was translated into English about the time of Edward IV. by Sir Thomas Malory, who altered as he pleased. The Story of the Holy Graal, in this book, is mostly taken from Malory, but partly from 'The High History of the Holy Graal,' translated by Dr. Sebastian Evans from an old French book.

What *was* the Holy Graal? In the stories it is the holy vessel used by our Lord, and brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea. But in the older heathen Irish stories there is a mysterious vessel of a magical sort, full of miraculous food, and probably the French writers of the romances confused this with the sacred vessel brought from the Holy Land. On account of the sins of men this relic was made invisible, but now and then it appeared, borne by angels or floating in a heavenly light. The Knights, against King Arthur's wish, made a vow to find it, and gave up their duties of redressing wrongs and keeping order, to pursue the beautiful vision. But most of them, for their sins, were unsuccessful, like Sir

Lancelot, and the Round Table was scattered and the kingdom was weakened by the neglect of ordinary duties in the search for what could never be gained by mortal men. This appears to be the moral of the story, if it has any moral. But the stories are confused almost like a dream, though it is a beautiful dream.

I

HOW THE KING WENT ON PILGRIMAGE, AND HIS SQUIRE WAS SLAIN IN A DREAM

Now the King was minded to go on a pilgrimage, and he agreed with the Queen that he would set forth to seek the holy chapel of St. Augustine, which is in the White Forest, and may only be found by adventure. Much he wished to undertake the quest alone, but this the Queen would not suffer, and to do her pleasure he consented that a youth, tall and strong of limb, should ride with him as his squire. Chaus was the youth's name, and he was son to Gwain li Aoutres. 'Lie within to-night,' commanded the King, 'and take heed that my horse be saddled at break of day, and my arms ready.' 'At your pleasure, Sir,' answered the youth, whose heart rejoiced because he was going alone with the King.

As night came on, all the Knights quitted the hall, but Chaus the squire stayed where he was, and would not take off his clothes or his shoes, lest sleep should fall on him and he might not be ready when the King called him. So he sat himself down by the great fire, but in spite of his will sleep fell heavily on him, and he dreamed a strange dream.

In his dream it seemed that the King had ridden away to the quest, and had left his squire behind him, which filled the young man with fear. And in his dream he set the saddle and bridle on his horse, and fastened his spurs, and girt on his sword, and galloped out of the castle after the King. He rode on a long space, till he entered a thick forest, and there before him lay traces of the King's horse, and he followed till the marks of the hoofs ceased suddenly at some open ground and he thought that the King had

alighted there. On the right stood a chapel, and about it was a graveyard, and in the graveyard many coffins, and in his dream it seemed as if the King had entered the chapel, so the young man entered also. But no man did he behold save a Knight that lay dead upon a bier in the midst of the chapel, covered with a pall of rich silk, and four tapers in golden candlesticks were burning round him. The squire marvelled to see the body lying there so lonely, with no one near it, and likewise that the King was nowhere to be seen. Then he took out one of the tall tapers, and hid the candlestick under his cloak, and rode away until he should find the King.

On his journey through the forest he was stopped by a man black and ill-favoured, holding a large knife in his hand.

'Ho! you that stand there, have you seen King Arthur?' asked the squire.

'No, but I have met you, and I am glad thereof, for you have under your cloak one of the candlesticks of gold that was placed in honour of the Knight who lies dead in the chapel. Give it to me, and I will carry it back; and if you do not this of your own will, I will make you.'

'By my faith!' cried the squire, 'I will never yield it to you! Rather, will I carry it off and make a present of it to King Arthur.'

'You will pay for it dearly,' answered the man, 'if you yield it not up forthwith.'

To this the squire did not make answer, but dashed forward, thinking to pass him by; but the man thrust at him with his knife, and it entered his body up to the hilt. And when the squire dreamed this, he cried, 'Help! help! for I am a dead man!'

As soon as the King and the Queen heard that cry they awoke from their sleep, and the Chamberlain said, 'Sir, you must be moving, for it is day'; and the King rose and dressed himself, and put on his shoes. Then the

cry came again: 'Fetch me a priest, for I die!' and the King ran at great speed into the hall, while the Queen and the Chamberlain followed him with torches and candles. 'What aileth you?' asked the King of his squire, and the squire told him of all that he had dreamed. 'Ha,' said the King, 'is it, then, a dream?' 'Yes, Sir,' answered the squire, 'but it is a right foul dream for me, for right foully it hath come true,' and he lifted his left arm, and said, 'Sir, look you here! Lo, here is the knife that was struck in my side up to the haft.' After that, he drew forth the candlestick, and showed it to the King. 'Sir, for this candlestick that I present to you was I wounded to the death!' The King took the candlestick in his hands and looked at it, and none so rich had he seen before, and he bade the Queen look also. 'Sir,' said the squire again, 'draw not forth the knife out of my body till I be shriven of the priest.' So the King commanded that a priest should be sent for, and when the squire had confessed his sins, the King drew the knife out of the body and the soul departed forthwith. Then the King grieved that the young man had come to his death in such strange wise, and ordered him a fair burial, and desired that the golden candlestick should be sent to the Church of St. Paul in London, which at that time was newly built.

After this King Arthur would have none to go with him on his quest, and many strange adventures he achieved before he reached the chapel of St. Augustine, which was in the midst of the White Forest. There he alighted from his horse, and sought to enter, but though there was neither door nor bar he might not pass the threshold. But from without he heard wondrous voices singing, and saw a light shining brighter than any that he had seen before, and visions such as he scarcely dared to look upon. And he resolved greatly to amend his sins, and to bring peace and order into his kingdom. So he set forth, strengthened and comforted, and after divers more adventures returned to his Court.

II

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GRAAL

It was on the eve of Pentecost that all the Knights of the Table Round met together at Camelot, and a great feast was made ready for them. And as they sat at supper they heard a loud noise, as of the crashing of thunder, and it seemed as if the roof would fall on them. Then, in the midst of the thunder, there entered a sunbeam, brighter by seven times than the brightest day, and its brightness was not of this world. The Knights held their peace, but every man looked at his neighbour, and his countenance shone fairer than ever it had done before. As they sat dumb, for their tongues felt as if they could speak nothing, there floated in the hall the Holy Graal, and over it a veil of white samite, so that none might see it nor who bare it. But sweet odours filled the place, and every Knight had set before him the food he loved best; and after that the Holy Vessel departed suddenly, they wist not where. When it had gone their tongues were loosened, and the King gave thanks for the wonders that they had been permitted to see. After that he had finished, Sir Gawaine stood up and vowed to depart the next morning in quest of the Holy Graal, and not to return until he had seen it. 'But if after a year and a day I may not speed in my quest,' said he, 'I shall come again, for I shall know that the sight of it is not for me.' And many of the Knights there sitting swore a like vow.

But King Arthur, when he heard this, was sore displeased. 'Alas!' cried he unto Sir Gawaine, 'you have undone me by your vow. For through you is broken up the fairest fellowship, and the truest of knighthood, that

ever the world saw, and when they have once departed they shall meet no more at the Table Round, for many shall die in the quest. It grieves me sore, for I have loved them as well as my own life.' So he spoke, and paused, and tears came into his eyes. 'Ah, Gawaine, Gawaine! you have set me in great sorrow.'

'Comfort yourself,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for we shall win for ourselves great honour, and much more than if we had died in any other wise, since die we must.' But the King would not be comforted, and the Queen and all the Court were troubled also for the love which they had to these Knights. Then the Queen came to Sir Galahad, who was sitting among those Knights, though younger he was than any of them, and asked him whence he came, and of what country, and if he was son to Sir Lancelot. And King Arthur did him great honour, and he rested him in his own bed. And next morning the King and Queen went into the Minster, and the Knights followed them, dressed all in armour, save only their shields and their helmets. When the service was finished the King would know how many of the fellowship had sworn to undertake the quest of the Graal, and they were counted, and found to number a hundred and fifty. They bade farewell, and mounted their horses, and rode through the streets of Camelot, and there was weeping of both rich and poor, and the King could not speak for weeping. And at sunrise they all parted company with each other, and every Knight took the way he best liked.

III

THE ADVENTURE OF SIR GALAHAD

Now Sir Galahad had as yet no shield, and he rode four days without meeting any adventure, till at last he came to a White Abbey, where he dismounted and asked if he might sleep there that night. The brethren received him with great reverence, and led him to a chamber, where he took off his armour, and then saw that he was in the presence of two Knights. 'Sirs,' said Sir Galahad, 'what adventure brought you hither?' 'Sir,' replied they, 'we heard that within this Abbey is a shield that no man may hang round his neck without being dead within three days, or some mischief befalling him. And if we fail in the adventure, you shall take it upon you.' 'Sirs,' replied Sir Galahad, 'I agree well thereto, for as yet I have no shield.'

So on the morn they arose and heard Mass, and then a monk led them behind an altar where hung a shield white as snow, with a red cross in the middle of it. 'Sirs,' said the monk, 'this shield can be hung round no Knight's neck, unless he be the worthiest Knight in the world, and therefore I counsel you to be well advised.'

'Well,' answered one of the Knights, whose name was King Bagdemagus, 'I know truly that I am not the best Knight in the world, but yet shall I try to bear it,' and he bare it out of the Abbey. Then he said to Sir Galahad, 'I pray you abide here still, till you know how I shall speed,' and he rode away, taking with him a squire to send tidings back to Sir Galahad.

After King Bagdemagus had ridden two miles he entered a fair valley, and there met him a goodly Knight

seated on a white horse and clad in white armour. And they came together with their spears, and Sir Bagdemagus was borne from his horse, for the shield covered him not at all. Therewith the strange Knight alighted and took the white shield from him, and gave it to the squire, saying, 'Bear this shield to the good Knight Sir Galahad that thou hast left in the Abbey, and greet him well from me.'

'Sir,' said the squire, 'what is your name?'

'Take thou no heed of my name,' answered the Knight, 'for it is not for thee to know, nor for any earthly man.'

'Now, fair Sir,' said the squire, 'tell me for what cause this shield may not be borne lest ill befalls him who bears it.'

'Since you have asked me,' answered the Knight, 'know that no man shall bear this shield, save Sir Galahad only.'

Then the squire turned to Bagdemagus, and asked him whether he were wounded or not. 'Yes, truly,' said he, 'and I shall hardly escape from death'; and scarcely could he climb on to his horse's back when the squire brought it near him. But the squire led him to a monastery that lay in the valley, and there he was treated of his wounds, and after long lying came back to life. After the squire had given the Knight into the care of the monks, he rode back to the Abbey, bearing with him the shield. 'Sir Galahad,' said he, alighting before him, 'the Knight that wounded Bagdemagus sends you greeting, and bids you bear this shield, which shall bring you many adventures.'

'Now blessed be God and fortune,' answered Sir Galahad, and called for his arms, and mounted his horse, hanging the shield about his neck. Then, followed by the squire, he set out. They rode straight to the hermitage, where they saw the White Knight who had sent the shield to Sir Galahad. The two Knights saluted

SIR GALAHAD OPENS THE TOMB

each other courteously, and then the White Knight told Sir Galahad the story of the shield, and how it had been given into his charge. Afterwards they parted, and Sir Galahad and his squire returned unto the Abbey whence they came.

The monks made great joy at seeing Sir Galahad again, for they feared he was gone for ever; and as soon as he was alighted from his horse they brought him unto a tomb in the churchyard where there was night and day such a noise that any man who heard it should be driven nigh mad, or else lose his strength. 'Sir,' they said, 'we deem it a fiend.' Sir Galahad drew near, all armed save his helmet, and stood by the tomb. 'Lift up the stone,' said a monk, and Galahad lifted it, and a voice cried, 'Come thou not nigh me, Sir Galahad, for thou shalt make me go again where I have been so long.' But Galahad took no heed of him, and lifted the stone yet higher, and there rushed from the tomb a foul smoke, and in the midst of it leaped out the foulest figure that ever was seen in the likeness of a man. 'Galahad,' said the figure, 'I see about thee so many angels that my power dare not touch thee.' Then Galahad, stooping down, looked into the tomb, and he saw a body all armed lying there, with a sword by his side. 'Fair brother,' said Galahad, 'let us remove this body, for he is not worthy to be in this churchyard, being a false Christian man.'

This being done they all departed and returned unto the monastery, where they lay that night, and the next morning Sir Galahad knighted Melias his squire, as he had promised him aforetime. So Sir Galahad and Sir Melias departed thence, in quest of the Holy Graal, but they soon went their different ways and fell upon different adventures. In his first encounter Sir Melias was sore wounded, and Sir Galahad came to his help, and left him to an old monk who said that he would heal him of his wounds in the space of seven weeks, and that he was

thus wounded because he had not come clean to the quest of the Graal, as Sir Galahad had done. Sir Galahad left him there, and rode on till he came to the Castle of Maidens, which he alone might enter who was free from sin. There he chased away the Knights who had seized the castle seven years agone, and restored all to the Duke's daughter, who owned it of right. Besides this he set free the maidens who were kept in prison, and summoned all those Knights in the country round who had held their lands of the Duke, bidding them do homage to his daughter. And in the morning one came to him and told him that as the seven Knights fled from the Castle of Maidens they fell upon the path of Sir Gawaine, Sir Gareth, and Sir Lewaine, who were seeking Sir Galahad, and they gave battle; and the seven Knights were slain by the three Knights. 'It is well,' said Galahad, and he took his armour and his horse and rode away.

So when Sir Galahad left the Castle of Maidens he rode till he came to a waste forest, and there he met with Sir Lancelot and Sir Percivale; but they knew him not, for he was now disguised. And they fought together, and the two Knights were smitten down out of the saddle. 'God be with thee, thou best Knight in the world,' cried a nun who dwelt in a hermitage close by; and she said it in a loud voice, so that Lancelot and Percivale might hear. But Sir Galahad feared that she would make known who he was, so he spurred his horse and struck deep into the forest before Sir Lancelot and Sir Percivale could mount again. They knew not which path he had taken, so Sir Percivale turned back to ask advice of the nun, and Sir Lancelot pressed forward.

LANCELOT AT THE CHAPEL

IV

HOW SIR LANCELOT SAW A VISION, AND REPENTED OF HIS SINS

He halted when he came to a stone cross, which had by it a block of marble, while nigh at hand stood an old chapel. He tied his horse to a tree, and hung his shield on a branch, and looked into the chapel, for the door was waste and broken. And he saw there a fair altar covered with a silken cloth, and a candlestick which had six branches, all of shining silver. A great light streamed from it, and at this sight Sir Lancelot would fain have entered in, but he could not. So he turned back sorrowful and dismayed, and took the saddle and bridle off his horse, and let him pasture where he would, while he himself unlaced his helm, and ungirded his sword, and lay down to sleep upon his shield, at the foot of the cross.

As he lay there, half waking and half sleeping, he saw two white palfreys come by, drawing a litter, wherein lay a sick Knight. When they reached the cross they paused, and Sir Lancelot heard the Knight say, 'O sweet Lord, when shall this sorrow leave me, and when shall the Holy Vessel come by me, through which I shall be blessed? For I have endured long, though my ill deeds were few.' Thus he spoke, and Sir Lancelot heard it, and of a sudden the great candlestick stood before the cross, though no man had brought it And with it was a table of silver and the Holy Vessel of the Graal, which Lancelot had seen aforetime. Then

the Knight rose up, and on his hands and knees he approached the Holy Vessel, and prayed, and was made whole of his sickness. After that the Graal went back into the chapel, and the light and the candlestick also, and Sir Lancelot would fain have followed, but could not, so heavy was the weight of his sins upon him. And the sick Knight arose and kissed the cross, and saw Sir Lancelot lying at the foot with his eyes shut. 'I marvel greatly at this sleeping Knight,' he said to his squire, 'that he had no power to wake when the Holy Vessel was brought hither.' 'I dare right well say,' answered the squire, 'that he dwelleth in some deadly sin, whereof he was never confessed.' 'By my faith,' said the Knight, 'he is unhappy, whoever he is, for he is of the fellowship of the Round Table, which have undertaken the quest of the Graal.' 'Sir,' replied the squire, 'you have all your arms here, save only your sword and your helm. Take therefore those of this strange Knight, who has just put them off.' And the Knight did as his squire said, and took Sir Lancelot's horse also, for it was better than his own.

After they had gone Sir Lancelot waked up wholly, and thought of what he had seen, wondering if he were in a dream or not. Suddenly a voice spoke to him, and it said, 'Sir Lancelot, more hard than is the stone, more bitter than is the wood, more naked and barren than is the leaf of the fig tree, art thou; therefore go from hence and withdraw thee from this holy place.' When Sir Lancelot heard this, his heart was passing heavy, and he wept, cursing the day when he had been born. But his helm and sword had gone from the spot where he had lain them at the foot of the cross, and his horse was gone also. And he smote himself and cried, 'My sin and my wickedness have done me this dishonour; for when I sought worldly adventures for worldly desires I ever achieved them and had the better in every place, and never was I discomfited in any quarrel, were it right or wrong.

And now I take upon me the adventures of holy things, I see and understand that my old sin hinders me, so that I could not move nor speak when the Holy Graal passed by.' Thus he sorrowed till it was day, and he heard the birds sing, and at that he felt comforted. And as his horse was gone also, he departed on foot with a heavy heart.

V

THE ADVENTURE OF SIR PERCIVALE

All this while Sir Percivale had pursued adventures of his own, and came nigh unto losing his life, but he was saved from his enemies by the good Knight, Sir Galahad, whom he did not know, although he was seeking him, for Sir Galahad now bore a red shield, and not a white one. And at last the foes fled deep into the forest, and Sir Galahad followed; but Sir Percivale had no horse and was forced to stay behind. Then his eyes were opened, and he knew it was Sir Galahad who had come to his help, and he sat down under a tree and grieved sore.

While he was sitting there a Knight passed by riding a black horse, and when he was out of sight a yeoman came pricking after as fast as he might, and, seeing Sir Percivale, asked if he had seen a Knight mounted on a black horse. 'Yes, Sir, forsooth,' answered Sir Percivale, 'why do you want to know?' 'Ah, Sir, that is my steed which he has taken from me, and wherever my lord shall find me, he is sure to slay me.' 'Well,' said Sir Percivale, 'thou seest that I am on foot, but had I a good horse I would soon come up with him.' 'Take my hackney,' said the yeoman, 'and do the best you can, and I shall follow you on foot to watch how you speed.' So Sir Percivale rode as fast as he might, and at last he saw that Knight, and he hailed him. The Knight turned and set his spear against Sir Percivale, and smote the hackney in the breast, so that he fell dead to the earth, and Sir Percivale fell with him; then the Knight rode away. But Sir Percivale was mad with wrath, and cried to the Knight to return and fight with him on foot,

SIR PERCIVALE SLAYS THE SERPENT

and the Knight answered not and went on his way. When Sir Percivale saw that he would not turn, he threw himself on the ground, and cast away his helm and sword, and bemoaned himself for the most unhappy of all Knights; and there he abode the whole day, and, being faint and weary, slept till it was midnight. And at midnight he waked and saw before him a woman, who said to him right fiercely, 'Sir Percivale, what doest thou here?' 'Neither good nor great ill,' answered he. 'If thou wilt promise to do my will when I call upon you,' said she, 'I will lend you my own horse, and he shall bear thee whither thou shalt choose.' This Sir Percivale promised gladly, and the woman went and returned with a black horse, so large and well-apparelled that Sir Percivale marvelled. But he mounted him gladly, and drove in his spurs, and within an hour and less the horse bare him four days' journey hence, and would have borne him into a rough water that roared, had not Sir Percivale pulled at his bridle. The Knight stood doubting, for the water made a great noise, and he feared lest his horse could not get through it. Still, wishing greatly to pass over, he made himself ready, and signed the sign of the cross upon his forehead.

At that the fiend which had taken the shape of a horse shook off Sir Percivale and dashed into the water, crying and making great sorrow; and it seemed to him that the water burned. Then Sir Percivale knew that it was not a horse but a fiend, which would have brought him to perdition, and he gave thanks and prayed all that night long. As soon as it was day he looked about him, and saw he was in a wild mountain, girt round with the sea and filled with wild beasts. Then he rose and went into a valley, and there he saw a young serpent bring a young lion by the neck, and after that there passed a great lion, crying and roaring after the serpent, and a fierce battle began between them. Sir Percivale thought to help the lion, as he was the more

natural beast of the twain, and he drew his sword and set his shield before him, and gave the serpent a deadly buffet. When the lion saw that, he made him all the cheer that a beast might make a man, and fawned about him like a spaniel, and stroked him with his paws. And about noon the lion took his little whelp, and placed him on his back, and bare him home again, and Sir Percivale, being left alone, prayed till he was comforted. But at eventide the lion returned, and couched down at his feet, and all night long he and the lion slept together.

VI

AN ADVENTURE OF SIR LANCELOT

As Lancelot went his way through the forest he met with many hermits who dwelled therein, and had adventure with the Knight who stole his horse and his helm, and got them back again. And he learned from one of the hermits that Sir Galahad was his son, and that it was he who at the Feast of Pentecost had sat in the Siege Perilous, which it was ordained by Merlin that none should sit in save the best Knight in the world. All that night Sir Lancelot abode with the hermit and laid him to rest, a hair shirt always on his body, and it pricked him sorely, but he bore it meekly and suffered the pain. When the day dawned he bade the hermit farewell. As he rode he came to a fair plain, in which was a great castle set about with tents and pavilions of divers hues. Here were full five hundred Knights riding on horseback, and those near the castle were mounted on black horses with black trappings, and they that were without were on white horses and their trappings white. And the two sides fought together, and Sir Lancelot looked on.

At last it seemed to him that the black Knights nearest the castle fared the worst, so, as he ever took the part of the weaker, he rode to their help and smote many of the white Knights to the earth and did marvellous deeds of arms. But always the white Knights held round Sir Lancelot to tire him out. And as no man may endure for ever, in the end Sir Lancelot waxed so faint of fighting that his arms would not lift themselves to deal a stroke ; then they took him, and led him away into the forest and made him alight from his horse and rest, and when he was taken the fellowship of the castle

were overcome for want of him. 'Never ere now was I at tournament or jousts but I had the best,' moaned Sir Lancelot to himself, as soon as the Knights had left him and he was alone. 'But now am I shamed, and I am persuaded that I am more sinful than ever I was.' Sorrowfully he rode on till he passed a chapel, where stood a nun, who called to him and asked him his name and what he was seeking.

So he told her who he was, and what had befallen him at the tournament, and the vision that had come to him in his sleep. 'Ah, Lancelot,' said she, 'as long as you were a Knight of earthly knighthood you were the most wonderful man in the world and the most adventurous. But now, since you are set among Knights of heavenly adventures, if you were worsted at that tournament it is no marvel. For the tournament was meant for a sign, and the earthly Knights were they who were clothed in black in token of the sins of which they were not yet purged. And the white Knights were they who had chosen the way of holiness, and in them the quest has already begun. Thus you beheld both the sinners and the good men, and when you saw the sinners overcome you went to their help, as they were your fellows in boasting and pride of the world, and all that must be left in that quest. And that caused your misadventure. Now that I have warned you of your vain-glory and your pride, beware of everlasting pain, for of all earthly Knights I have pity of you, for I know well that among earthly sinful Knights you are without peer.'

VII

AN ADVENTURE OF SIR GAWAINE

Sir Gawaine rode long without meeting any adventure, and from Pentecost to Michaelmas found none that pleased him. But at Michaelmas he met Sir Ector de Maris and rejoiced greatly.

As they sat talking there appeared before them a hand showing unto the elbow covered with red samite, and holding a great candle that burned right clear; and the hand passed into the chapel and vanished, they knew not where. Then they heard a voice which said, 'Knights full of evil faith and poor belief, these two things have failed you, and therefore you may not come to the adventure of the Holy Graal.' And this same told them a holy man to whom they confessed their sins, 'for,' said he, 'you have failed in three things, charity, fasting, and truth, and have been great murderers. But sinful as Sir Lancelot was, since he went into the quest he never slew man, nor shall, till he come into Camelot again. For he has taken upon him to forsake sin. And were he not so unstable, he should be the next to achieve it, after Galahad his son. Yet shall he die an holy man, and in earthly sinful men he has no fellow.'

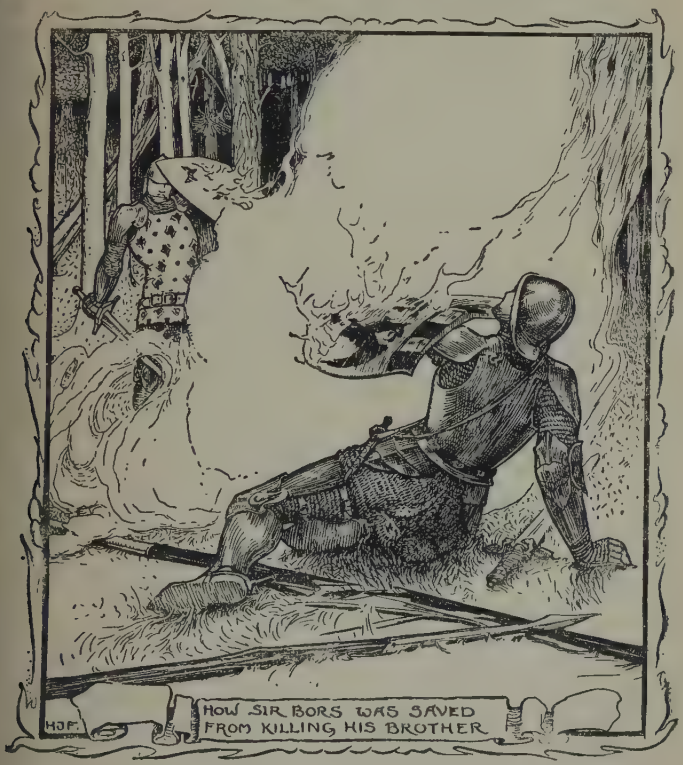
'Sir,' said Gawaine, 'by your words it seems that our sins will not let us labour in that quest?' 'Truly,' answered the hermit, 'there be an hundred such as you to whom it will bring naught but shame.' So Gawaine departed and followed Sir Ector, who had ridden on before.

VIII

THE ADVENTURE OF SIR BORS

When Sir Bors left Camelot on his quest he met a holy man riding on an ass, and Sir Bors saluted him. Then the good man knew him to be one of the Knights who were in quest of the Holy Graal. 'What are you?' said he, and Sir Bors answered, 'I am a Knight that fain would be counselled in the quest of the Graal, for he shall have much earthly worship that brings it to an end.' 'That is true,' said the good man, 'for he will be the best Knight in the world, but know well that there shall none attain it but by holiness and by confession of sin.' So they rode together till they came to the hermitage, and the good man led Sir Bors into the chapel, where he made confession of his sins, and they ate bread and drank water together. 'Now,' said the hermit, 'I pray you that you eat none other till you sit at the table where the Holy Graal shall be.' 'Sir,' answered Sir Bors, 'I agree thereto, but how know you that I shall sit there?' 'That know I,' said the holy man, 'but there will be but few of your fellows with you. Also instead of a shirt you shall wear this garment until you have achieved your quest,' and Sir Bors took off his clothes, and put on instead a scarlet coat. Then the good man questioned him, and marvelled to find him pure in life, and he armed him and bade him go. After this Sir Bors rode through many lands, and had many adventures, and was often sore tempted, but remembered the words of the holy man and kept his life clean of wrong. And once he had by mischance almost slain his own brother, but a voice cried, 'Flee, Bors, and touch him not,' and he hearkened and stayed his hand. And there fell between them a fiery cloud, which

burned up both their shields, and they two fell to the earth in a great swoon; but when they awakened out of it Bors saw that his brother had no harm. With that the voice spoke to him saying, 'Bors, go hence and bear your brother fellowship no longer; but take your way to the



sea, where Sir Percivale abides till you come.' Then Sir Bors prayed his brother to forgive him all he had unknowingly done, and rode straight to the sea. On the shore he found a vessel covered with white samite, and as soon as he stepped in the vessel it set sail so fast it might have

been flying, and Sir Bors lay down and slept till it was day. When he waked he saw a Knight lying in the midst of the ship, all armed save for his helm, and he knew him for Sir Percivale, and welcomed him with great joy; and they told each other of their adventures and of their temptations, and had great happiness in each other's company. 'We lack nothing but Galahad, the good Knight,' Sir Percivale said.

IX

ADVENTURE OF SIR GALAHAD

Sir Galahad rested one evening at a hermitage. And while he was resting, there came a gentlewoman and asked leave of the hermit to speak with Sir Galahad, and would not be denied, though she was told he was weary and asleep. Then the hermit waked Sir Galahad and bade him rise, as a gentlewoman had great need of him, so Sir Galahad rose and asked her what she wished. 'Galahad,' said she, 'I will that you arm yourself, and mount your horse and follow me, and I will show you the highest adventure that ever any Knight saw.' And Sir Galahad bade her go, and he would follow wherever she led. In three days they reached the sea, where they found the ship where Sir Bors and Sir Percivale were lying. And the lady bade him leave his horse behind and said she would leave hers also, but their saddles and bridles they would take on board the ship. This they did, and were received with great joy by the two Knights; then the sails were spread, and the ship was driven before the wind at a marvellous pace till they reached the land of Logris, the entrance to which lies between two great rocks with a whirlpool in the middle.

Their own ship might not get safely through; but they left it and went into another ship that lay there, which had neither man nor woman in it. At the end of the ship was written these words: 'Thou man which shall enter this ship beware thou be in steadfast belief; if thou fail, I shall not help thee.' Then the gentlewoman turned and said, 'Percivale, do you know who I am?' 'No, truly,' answered he. 'I am your sister, and therefore you are the man in the world

that I most love. If you are without faith, or have any hidden sin, beware how you enter, else you will perish.' 'Fair sister,' answered he, 'I shall enter therein, for if I am an untrue Knight then shall I perish.' So they entered the ship, and it was rich and well adorned, that they all marvelled.

In the midst of it was a fair bed, and Sir Galahad went thereto and found on it a crown of silk, and a sword drawn out of its sheath half a foot and more. The sword was of divers fashions, and the pommel of stone, wrought about with colours, and every colour with its own virtue, and the handle was of the ribs of two beasts. The one was the bone of a serpent, and no hand that handles it shall ever become weary or hurt; and the other is the bone of a fish that swims in Euphrates, and whoso handles it shall not think on joy or sorrow that he has had, but only on that which he beholds before him. And no man shall grip this sword but one that is better than other men. So first Sir Percivale stepped forward and set his hand to the sword, but he might not grasp it. Next Sir Bors tried to seize it, but he also failed. When Sir Galahad beheld the sword, he saw that there was written on it, in letters of blood, that he who tried to draw it should never fail of shame in his body or be wounded to the death. 'By my faith,' said Galahad, 'I would draw this sword out of its sheath, but the offending is so great I shall not lay my hand thereto.' 'Sir,' answered the gentlewoman, 'know that no man can draw this sword save you alone'; and she told him many tales of the Knights who had set their hands to it, and of the evil things that had befallen them. And they all begged Sir Galahad to grip the sword, as it was ordained that he should. 'I will grip it,' said Galahad, 'to give you courage, but it belongs no more to me than it does to you.' Then he gripped it tight with his fingers, and the gentlewoman girt him about the middle with the sword, and after that they left that ship and went into

another, which brought them to land, where they fell upon many strange adventures. And when they had wrought many great deeds, they departed from each other. But first Sir Percivale's sister died, being bled to death, so that another lady might live, and she prayed them to lay her body in a boat and leave the boat to go as the winds and waves carried it. And so it was done, and Sir Percivale wrote a letter telling how she had helped them in all their adventures; and he put it in her right hand, and laid her in a barge, and covered it with black silk. And the wind arose and drove it from their sight.

X

SIR LANCELOT MEETS SIR GALAHAD, AND THEY PART FOR EVER

Now we must tell what happened to Sir Lancelot.

When he was come to a water called Mortoise he fell asleep, awaiting for the adventure that should be sent to him, and in his sleep a voice spoke to him, and bade him rise and take his armour, and enter the first ship he should find. So he started up and took his arms and made him ready, and on the strand he found a ship that was without sail or oar. As soon as he was within the ship, he felt himself wrapped round with a sweetness such as he had never known before, as if all that he could desire was fulfilled. And with this joy and peace about him he fell asleep. When he woke he found near him a fair bed, with a dead lady lying on it, whom he knew to be Sir Percivale's sister, and in her hand was the tale of her adventures, which Sir Lancelot took and read. For a month or more they dwelt in that ship together, and one day, when it had drifted near the shore, he heard a sound as of a horse; and when the steps came nearer he saw that a Knight was riding him. At the sight of the ship the Knight alighted and took the saddle and bridle, and entered the ship. 'You are welcome,' said Lancelot, and the Knight saluted him and said, 'What is your name? for my heart goeth out to you.'

'Truly,' answered he, 'my name is Sir Lancelot du Lake.'

'Sir,' said the new Knight, 'you are welcome, for you were the beginner of me in the world.'

'Ah,' cried Sir Lancelot, 'is it you, then, Galahad?'

'Yes, in sooth,' said he, and kneeled down and asked

Lancelot's blessing, and then took off his helm and kissed him. And there was great joy between them, and they told each other all that had befallen them since they left King Arthur's Court. Then Galahad saw the gentlewoman dead on the bed, and he knew her, and said he held her in great worship, and that she was the best maid in the world, and how it was great pity that she had come to her death. But when Lancelot heard that Galahad had won the marvellous sword he prayed that he might see it, and kissed the pommel and the hilt, and the scabbard. 'In truth,' he said, 'never did I know of adventures so wonderful and strange.' So dwelled Lancelot and Galahad in that ship for half a year, and served God daily and nightly with all their power. And after six months had gone it befell that on a Monday they drifted to the edge of the forest, where they saw a Knight with white armour bestriding one horse and holding another all white, by the bridle. And he came to the ship, and saluted the two Knights and said, 'Galahad, you have been long enough with your father, therefore leave that ship and start upon this horse, and go on the quest of the Holy Graal.' So Galahad went to his father and kissed him, saying, 'Fair sweet father, I know not if I shall see you more till I have beheld the Holy Graal.' Then they heard a voice which said, 'The one shall never see the other till the day of doom.' 'Now, Galahad,' said Lancelot, 'since we are to bid farewell for ever now, I pray to the great Father to preserve me and you both.' 'Sir,' answered Galahad, 'no prayer availeth so much as yours.'

The next day Sir Lancelot made his way back to Camelot, where he found King Arthur and Guenevere; but many of the Knights of the Round Table were slain and destroyed more than the half. All the Court was passing glad to see Sir Lancelot, and the King asked many tidings of his son Sir Galahad.

XI

HOW SIR GALAHAD FOUND THE GRAAL AND DIED OF THAT FINDING

Sir Galahad rode on till he met Sir Percivale and afterwards Sir Bors, whom they greeted most gladly, and they bare each other company. First they came to the Castle of Carbonek, where dwelled King Pelles, who welcomed them with joy, for he knew by their coming that they had fulfilled the quest of the Graal. They then departed on other adventures, and with the blood out of the Holy Lance Galahad anointed the maimed King and healed him. That same night at midnight a voice bade them arise and quit the castle, which they did, followed by three Knights of Gaul. Then Galahad prayed every one of them that if they reached King Arthur's Court, they should salute Sir Lancelot, his father, and those Knights of the Round Table that were present, and with that he left them, and Sir Bors and Sir Percivale with him. For three days they rode till they came to a shore, and found a ship awaiting them. And in the midst of it was the table of silver, and the Holy Graal which was covered with red samite. Then were their hearts right glad, and they made great reverence thereto, and Galahad prayed that at what time he asked, he might depart out of this world. So long he prayed that at length a voice said to him, 'Galahad, thou shalt have thy desire, and when thou askest the death of the body thou shalt have it, and shalt find the life of the soul.' Percivale likewise heard the voice, and besought Galahad to tell him why he asked such things. And Galahad answered, 'The other day when we saw a part of the adventures of the Holy

LANCELOT & THE DWARF.

Graal, I was in such a joy of heart that never did man feel before, and I knew well that when my body is dead my soul shall be in joy of which the other was but a shadow.'

Some time were the three Knights in that ship, till at length they saw before them the city of Sarras. Then they took from the ship the table of silver, and Sir Percivale and Sir Bors went first, and Sir Galahad followed after to the gate of the city, where sat an old man that was crooked. At the sight of the old man Sir Galahad called to him to help them carry the table, for it was heavy. 'Truly,' answered the old man, 'it is ten years since I have gone without crutches.' 'Care not for that,' said Galahad, 'but rise up and show your good will.' So he arose and found himself as whole as ever he was, and he ran to the table and held up the side next Galahad. And there was much noise in the city that a cripple was healed by three Knights newly entered in. This reached the ears of the King, who sent for the Knights and questioned them. And they told him the truth, and of the Holy Graal; but the King listened nothing to all they said, but put them into a deep hole in the prison. Even here they were not without comfort, for a vision of the Holy Graal sustained them. And at the end of a year the King lay sick and felt he should die, and he called the three Knights and asked forgiveness of the evil he had done to them, which they gave gladly. Then he died, and the whole city was afraid and knew not what to do, till while they were in counsel a voice came to them and bade them choose the youngest of the three strange Knights for their King. And they did so. After Galahad was proclaimed King, he ordered that a coffer of gold and precious stones should be made to encompass the table of silver, and every day he and the two Knights would kneel before it and make their prayers.

Now at the year's end, and on the selfsame day that Galahad had been crowned King, he arose up early and

came with the two Knights to the Palace; and he saw a man in the likeness of a Bishop, encircled by a great crowd of angels, kneeling before the Holy Vessel. And he called to Galahad and said to him, 'Come forth, thou servant of Christ, and thou shalt see what thou hast much desired to see.' Then Galahad began to tremble right hard, when the flesh first beheld the things of the spirit, and he held up his hands to heaven and said, 'Lord, I thank thee, for now I see that which hath been my desire for many a day. Now, blessed Lord, I would no longer live, if it might please thee.' Then Galahad went to Percivale and kissed him, and commended him to God; and he went to Sir Bors and kissed him, and commended him to God, and said, 'Fair lord, salute me to my lord Sir Lancelot, my father, and bid him remember this unstable world.' Therewith he kneeled down before the table and made his prayers, and while he was praying his soul suddenly left the body and was carried by angels up into heaven, which the two Knights right well beheld. Also they saw come from heaven a hand, but no body behind it, and it came unto the Vessel, and took it and the spear, and bare them back to heaven. And since then no man has dared to say that he has seen the Holy Graal.

When Percivale and Bors saw Galahad lying dead they made as much sorrow as ever two men did, and the people of the country and of the city were right heavy. And they buried him as befitted their King. As soon as Galahad was buried, Sir Percivale sought a hermitage outside the city, and put on the dress of a hermit, and Sir Bors was always with him, but kept the dress that he wore at Court. When a year and two months had passed Sir Percivale died also, and was buried by the side of Galahad; and Sir Bors left that land, and after long riding came to Camelot. Then was there great joy made of him in the Court, for they had held him as dead; and the King ordered great clerks to attend him, and to write

down all his adventures and those of Sir Percivale and Sir Galahad. Next, Sir Lancelot told the adventures of the Graal which he had seen, and this likewise was written and placed with the other in almonries at Salisbury. And by and by Sir Bors said to Sir Lancelot, 'Galahad your son saluteth you by me, and after you King Arthur and all the Court, and so did Sir Percivale; for I buried them with mine own hands in the City of Sarras. Also, Sir Lancelot, Galahad prayeth you to remember of this uncertain world, as you promised when you were together!' 'That is true,' said Sir Lancelot, 'and I trust his prayer may avail me.' But the prayer but little availed Sir Lancelot, for he fell to his old sins again. And now the Knights were few that survived the search for the Graal, and the evil days of Arthur began.

THE FIGHT FOR THE QUEEN

So the quest of the Holy Graal had been fulfilled, and the few Knights that had been left alive returned to the Round Table, and there was great joy in the Court. To do them honour the Queen made them a dinner; and there were four and twenty Knights present, and among them Sir Patrise of Ireland, and Sir Gawaine and his brethren, the King's nephews, which were Sir Agrawaine, Sir Gaheris, Sir Gareth, and Sir Mordred. Now it was the custom of Sir Gawaine daily at dinner and supper to eat all manner of fruit, and especially pears and apples, and this the Queen knew, and set fruit of all sorts before him. And there was present at the dinner one Sir Pinel le Savage, who hated Sir Gawaine because he and his brethren had slain Sir Lamorak du Galis, cousin to Sir Pinel; so he put poison into some of the apples, hoping that Sir Gawaine would eat one and die. But by ill fortune it befell that the good Knight Sir Patrise took a poisoned apple, and in a few moments he lay dead and stark in his seat. At this sight all the Knights leapt to their feet, but said nothing, for they bethought them that Queen Guenevere had made them the dinner, and feared that she had poisoned the fruit.

'My lady, the Queen,' said Sir Gawaine, who was the first to speak, 'this fruit was brought for me, for all know how well I love it; therefore, Madam, the shame of this ill deed is yours.' The Queen stood still, pale and trembling, but kept silence, and next spoke Sir Mador de la Porte.

'This shall not be ended so,' said he, 'for I have lost a noble Knight of my blood, and I will be avenged of the person who has wrought this evil.' And he turned to the Queen and said, 'Madam, it is you who have brought about the death of my cousin, Sir Patrise!' The Knights round listened in silence, for they too thought Sir Mador spake truth. And the Queen still said nothing, but fell to weeping bitterly, till King Arthur heard and came to look into the matter. And when they told him of their trouble his heart was heavy within him.

'Fair lords,' said the King at last, 'I grieve for this ill deed; but I cannot meddle therein, or do battle for my wife, for I have to judge justly. Sure I am that this deed is none of hers, therefore many a good Knight will stand her champion that she be not burned to death in a wrong quarrel. And, Sir Mador, hold not your head so high, but fix the day of battle, when you shall find a Knight to answer you, or else it were great shame to all my Court.'

'My gracious lord,' said Sir Mador, 'you must hold me excused. But though you are a King you are also a Knight, and must obey the laws of knighthood. Therefore I beseech your forgiveness if I declare that none of the four and twenty Knights here present will fight that battle. What say you, my lords?' Then the Knights answered that they could not hold the Queen guiltless, for as the dinner was made by her either she or her servants must have done this thing.

'Alas!' said the Queen, 'no evil was in my heart when I prepared this feast, for never have I done such foul deeds.'

'My lord the King,' cried Sir Mador, 'I require of you, as you are a just King, to fix a day that I may get ready for the fight!'

'Well,' answered the King, 'on the fifteenth day from this come on horseback to the meadow that is by Westminster. And if it happens that there be a Knight to

fight with you, strike as hard as you will, God will speed the right. But if no Knight is there, then must my Queen be burned, and a fire shall be made in the meadow.'

SIR MADOR ACCUSES GUENEVERE

'I am answered,' said Sir Mador, and he and the rest of the Knights departed.

When the King and Queen were left alone he asked

her what had brought all this about. 'God help me, that I know not,' said the Queen, 'nor how it was done.'

'Where is Sir Lancelot?' said King Arthur, looking round. 'If he were here, he would not grudge to do battle for you.'

'Sir,' replied the Queen, 'I know not where he is, but his brother and his kinsmen think he is not in this realm.'

'I grieve for that,' said the King, 'for he would soon stop this strife. But I counsel you, ask Sir Bors, and he will not refuse you. For well I see that none of the four and twenty Knights who were with you at dinner will be your champion, and none will say well of you, but men will speak evil of you at the Court.'

'Alas!' sighed the Queen, 'I do indeed miss Sir Lancelot, for he would soon ease my heart.'

'What ails you?' asked the King, 'that you cannot keep Sir Lancelot at your side, for well you know that he who Sir Lancelot fights for has the best Knight in the world for his champion. Now go your way, and command Sir Bors to do battle with you for Sir Lancelot's sake.' So the Queen departed from the King, and sent for Sir Bors into her chamber, and when he came she besought his help.

'Madam,' said he, 'what can I do? for I may not meddle in this matter lest the Knights who were at the dinner have me in suspicion, for I was there also. It is now, Madam, that you miss Sir Lancelot, whom you have driven away, as he would have done battle for you were you right or wrong, and I wonder how for shame's sake you can ask me, knowing how I love and honour him.'

'Alas,' said the Queen, 'I throw myself on your grace,' and she went down on her knees and besought Sir Bors to have mercy on her, 'else I shall have a shameful death, and one I have never deserved.' At that King Arthur came in, and found her kneeling before Sir Bors.

'Madam! you do me great dishonour,' said Sir Bors, raising her up.

'Ah, gentle Knight,' cried the King, 'have mercy on my Queen, for I am sure that they speak falsely. And I require by the love of Sir Lancelot that you do battle for her instead of him.'

'My lord,' answered Sir Bors, 'you require of me the hardest thing that ever anyone asked of me, for well you know that if I fight for the Queen I shall anger all my companions of the Round Table; but I will not say nay, my lord, for Sir Lancelot's sake and for your sake! On that day I will be the Queen's champion, unless a better Knight is found to do battle for her.'

'Will you promise me this?' asked the King.

'Yes,' answered Sir Bors, 'I will not fail you nor her, unless there should come a better Knight than I, then he shall have the battle.' Then the King and Queen rejoiced greatly, and thanked Sir Bors with all their hearts.

So Sir Bors departed and rode unto Sir Lancelot, who was with the hermit Sir Brasias, and told him of this adventure. 'Ah,' said Sir Lancelot, 'this has befallen as I would have it, and therefore I pray you make ready to do battle, but delay the fight as long as you can that I may appear. For I am sure that Sir Mador is a hot Knight, and the longer he waits the more impatient he will be for the combat.'

'Sir,' answered Sir Bors, 'let me deal with him. Doubt not you shall have all your will.' And he rode away, and came again to the Court.

It was soon noised about that Sir Bors would be the Queen's champion, and many Knights were displeased with him; but there were a few who held the Queen to be innocent. Sir Bors spoke unto them all, and said, 'It were shameful, my fair lords, if we suffered the most noble Queen in the world to be disgraced openly, not only for her sake, but for the King's.' But they an-

GVENEVERE & SIR BORS

swered him: 'As for our lord King Arthur, we love him and honour him as much as you; but as for Queen Guenevere, we love her not, for she is the destroyer of good Knights.'

'Fair lords,' said Sir Bors, 'you shall not speak such words, for never yet have I heard that she was the destroyer of good Knights. But at all times, as far as I ever knew, she maintained them and gave them many gifts. And therefore it were a shame to us all if we suffered our noble King's wife to be put to death, and I will not suffer it. So much I will say, that the Queen is not guilty of Sir Patrise's death; for she owed him no ill will, and bade him and us to the dinner for no evil purpose, which will be proved hereafter. And in any case there was foul dealing among us.'

'We may believe your words,' said some of the Knights, but others held that he spoke falsely.

The days passed quickly by until the evening before the battle, when the Queen sent for Sir Bors and asked him if he was ready to keep his promise.

'Truly, Madam,' answered he, 'I shall not fail you, unless a better Knight than I am come to do battle for you. Then, Madam, I am discharged of my promise.'

'Shall I tell this to my lord Arthur?' said the Queen.

'If it pleases you, Madam,' answered Sir Bors. So the Queen went to the King, and told him what Sir Bors had said, and the King bade her to be comforted, as Sir Bors was one of the best Knights of the Round Table.

The next morning the King and Queen, and all manner of Knights, rode into the meadow of Westminster, where the battle was to be; and the Queen was put into the Guard of the High Constable, and a stout iron stake was planted, and a great fire made about it, at which the Queen should be burned if Sir Mador de la Porte won the fight. For it was the custom in those days that neither fear nor favour, love nor kinship, should hinder right judgment. Then came Sir Mador de la Porte, and

made oath before the King that the Queen had done to death his cousin Sir Patrise, and he would prove it on her Knight's body, let who would say the contrary. Sir Bors likewise made answer that Queen Guenevere had done no wrong, and that he would make good with his two hands. 'Then get you ready,' said Sir Mador. 'Sir Mador,' answered Sir Bors, 'I know you for a good Knight, but I trust to be able to withstand your malice; and I have promised King Arthur and my lady the Queen that I will do battle for her to the uttermost, unless there come forth a better Knight than I am.'

'Is that all?' asked Sir Mador; 'but you must either fight now or own that you are beaten.'

'Take your horse,' said Sir Bors, 'for I shall not tarry long,' and Sir Mador forthwith rode into the field with his shield on his shoulder, and his spear in his hand, and he went up and down crying unto King Arthur, 'Bid your champion come forth if he dare.' At that Sir Bors was ashamed, and took his horse, and rode to the end of the lists. But from a wood hard by appeared a Knight riding fast on a white horse, bearing a shield full of strange devices. When he reached Sir Bors he drew rein and said, 'Fair Knight, be not displeased, but this battle must be to a better Knight than you. For I have come a great journey to fight this fight, as I promised when I spoke with you last, and I thank you heartily for your goodwill.' So Sir Bors went to King Arthur and told him that a Knight had come who wished to do battle for the Queen. 'What Knight is he?' asked the King.

'That I know not,' said Sir Bors; 'but he made a covenant with me to be here this day, and now I am discharged,' said Sir Bors.

Then the King called to that Knight and asked him if he would fight for the Queen. 'For that purpose I came hither,' replied he, 'and therefore, Sir King, delay me no longer, for as soon as I have ended this battle I

ARTHUR AND GUENEVERE
KISS BEFORE ALL THE PEOPLE

must go hence, as I have many matters elsewhere. And I would have you know that it is a dishonour to all the Knights of the Round Table to let so noble a lady and so courteous a Queen as Queen Guenevere be shamed amongst you.'

The Knights who were standing round looked at each other at these words, and wondered much what man this was who took the battle upon him, for none knew him save Sir Bors.

'Sir,' said Sir Mador de la Porte unto the King, 'let me know the name of him with whom I have to do.' But the King answered nothing, and made a sign for the fight to begin. They rode to the end of the lists, and couched their spears and rushed together with all their force, and Sir Mador's spear broke in pieces. But the other Knight's spear held firm, and he pressed on Sir Mador's horse till it fell backward with a great fall. Sir Mador sprang from his horse, and, placing his shield before him, drew his sword, and bade his foe dismount from his horse also, and do battle with him on foot, which the unknown Knight did. For an hour they fought thus, as Sir Mador was a strong man, and had proved himself the victor in many combats. At last the Knight smote Sir Mador grovelling to his knees, and the Knight stepped forward to have struck him flat upon the ground. Therewith Sir Mador suddenly rose, and smote the Knight upon the thigh, so that the blood ran out fiercely. But when the Knight felt himself wounded, and saw his blood, he let Sir Mador rise to his feet, and then he gave him such a buffet on the helm that this time Sir Mador fell his length on the earth, and the Knight sprang to him, to unloose his helm. At this Sir Mador prayed for his life, acknowledging that he was overcome, and confessed that the Queen's innocence had been proved. 'I will only grant you your life,' said the Knight, 'if you will proclaim publicly that you have foully slandered the Queen, and that you make no

mention, on the tomb of Sir Patrise, that ever Queen Guenevere consented to his murder.' 'All that will I do,' said Sir Mador, and some Knights took him up, and carried him away to heal his wounds. And the other Knight went straight to the foot of the steps where sat King Arthur, and there the Queen had just come, and the King and the Queen kissed each other before all the people. When King Arthur saw the Knight standing there he stooped down to him and thanked him, and so likewise did the Queen; and they prayed him to put off his helmet, and commanded wine to be brought, and when he unlaced his helmet to drink they knew him to be Sir Lancelot du Lake. Then Arthur took the Queen's hand and led her to Sir Lancelot and said, 'Sir, I give you the most heartfelt thanks of the great deed you have done this day for me and my Queen.'

'My lord,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'you know well that I ought of right ever to fight your battles, and those of my lady the Queen. For it was you who gave me the high honour of knighthood, and that same day my lady the Queen did me a great service, else I should have been put to shame before all men. Because in my hastiness I lost my sword, and my lady the Queen found it and gave it to me when I had sore need of it. And therefore, my lord Arthur, I promised her that day that I would be her Knight in right or in wrong.'

'I owe you great thanks,' said the King, 'and some time I hope to repay you.' The Queen, beholding Sir Lancelot, wept tears of joy for her deliverance, and felt bowed to the ground with sorrow at the thought of what he had done for her, when she had sent him away with unkind words. Then all the Knights of the Round Table and his kinsmen drew near to him and welcomed him, and there was great mirth in the Court.

THE FAIR MAID OF ASTOLAT

Soon after this it befell that the damsel of the lake, called by some Nimue and by others Vivien, wedded Sir Pelleas, and came to the Court of King Arthur. And when she heard the talk of the death of Sir Patrise and how the Queen had been accused of it, she found out by means of her magic that the tale was false, and told it openly that the Queen was innocent and that it was Sir Pinel who had poisoned the apple. Then he fled into his own country, where none might lay hands on him. So Sir Patrise was buried in the Church of Westminster, and on his tomb was written, 'Here lieth Sir Patrise of Ireland, slain by Sir Pinel le Savage, that empoisoned apples to have slain Sir Gawaine, and by misfortune Sir Patrise ate one of those apples and then suddenly he burst.' Also there was put upon the tomb that Queen Guenevere was accused of the death of Sir Patrise by Sir Mador de la Porte, and how Sir Lancelot fought with him and overcame him in battle. All this was written on the tomb.

And daily Sir Mador prayed to have the Queen's grace once more, and by means of Sir Lancelot he was forgiven. It was now the middle of the summer, and King Arthur proclaimed that in fifteen days a great tourney should be held at Camelot, which is now called Winchester, and many Knights and Kings made ready to do themselves honour. But the Queen said she would stay behind, for she was sick, and did not care for the noise and bustle of a tourney. 'It grieves me you should say that,' said the

King, 'for you will not have seen so noble a company gathered together this seven years past, save at the Whitsuntide when Galahad departed from the Court.'

'Truly,' answered the Queen, 'the sight will be grand. Nevertheless you must hold me excused, for I cannot be there.'

Sir Lancelot likewise declared that his wounds were not healed and that he could not bear himself in a tourney as he was wont to do. At this the King was wroth, that he might not have either his Queen or his best Knight with him, and he departed towards Winchester and by the way lodged in a town now called Guildford, but then Astolat. And when the King had set forth, the Queen sent for Sir Lancelot, and told him he was to blame for having excused himself from going with the King, who set such store by his company; and Sir Lancelot said he would be ruled by her, and would ride forth next morning on his way to Winchester; 'but I should have you know,' said he, 'that at the tourney I shall be against the King and his Knights.'

'You must do as you please,' replied the Queen, 'but if you will be ruled by my counsel, you will fight on his side.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I pray you not to be displeased with me. I will take the adventure as it comes,' and early next morning he rode away till at eventide he reached Astolat. He went through the town till he stopped before the house of an old Baron, Sir Bernard of Astolat, and as he dismounted from his horse, the King spied him from the gardens of the castle. 'It is well,' he said smiling to the Knights that were beside him, 'I see one man who will play his part in the jousts, and I will undertake that he will do marvels.'

'Who is that?' asked they all. 'You must wait to know that,' replied the King, and went into the castle. Meantime Sir Lancelot had entered his lodging, and the old Baron bade him welcome, but he knew not

it was Sir Lancelot. 'Fair Sir,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I pray you lend me, if you can, a shield with a device which no man knows, for mine they know well.'

'Sir,' answered Sir Bernard, 'you shall have your wish, for you seem one of the goodliest Knights in the world. And, Sir, I have two sons, both but lately knighted, Sir Tirre who was wounded on the day of his knighthood, and his shield you shall have. My youngest son, Sir Lavaine, shall ride with you, if you will have his company, to the jousts. For my heart is much drawn to you, and tell me, I beseech you, what name I shall call you by.'

'You must hold me excused as to that, just now,' said Sir Lancelot, 'but if I speed well at the jousts, I will come again and tell you. But let me have Sir Lavaine with me, and lend me, as you have offered, his brother's shield.' 'This shall be done,' replied Sir Bernard.

Besides these two sons, Sir Bernard had a daughter whom everyone called The Fair Maid of Astolat, though her real name was Elaine le Blanc. And when she looked on Sir Lancelot, her love went forth to him and she could never take it back, and in the end it killed her. As soon as her father told her that Sir Lancelot was going to the tourney she besought him to wear her token in the jousts, but he was not willing. 'Fair damsel,' he said, 'if I did that, I should have done more for your love than ever I did for lady or damsel.' But then he remembered that he was to go disguised to the tourney, and because he had before never worn any manner of token of any damsel, he bethought him that, if he should take one of hers, none would know him. So he said to her, 'Fair damsel, I will wear your token on my helmet, if you will show me what it is.'

'Sir,' she answered, 'it is a red sleeve, embroidered in great pearls,' and she brought it to him. 'Never have I done so much for any damsel,' said he, and gave his own shield into her keeping, till he came again. Sir Arthur had waited three days in Astolat for some Knights

who were long on the road, and when they had arrived they all set forth, and were followed by Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine, both with white shields, and Sir Lancelot bore besides the red sleeve that was a token. Now Camelot was filled with a great number of Kings and Lords and Knights, but Sir Lavaine found means to lodge both himself and Sir Lancelot secretly with a rich burgess, and no man knew who they were or whence they came. And there they stayed till the day of the tourney. At earliest dawn the trumpets blew, and King Arthur took his seat upon a high scaffold, so that he might see who had done best; but he would not suffer Sir Gawaine to go from his side, for Sir Gawaine never won the prize when Sir Lancelot was in the field, and as King Arthur knew, Sir Lancelot oftentimes disguised himself.

Then the Knights formed into two parties and Sir Lancelot made him ready, and fastened the red sleeve upon his helmet, and he and Sir Lavaine rode into a little wood that lay behind the Knights who should fight against those of the Round Table. 'Sir,' said Sir Lancelot, 'yonder is a company of good Knights and they hold together as boars that are vexed with dogs.'

'That is truth,' said Sir Lavaine.

'Now,' said Sir Lancelot, 'if you will help me a little, you shall see King Arthur's side, which is winning, driven back as fast as they came.'

'Spare not, Sir,' answered Sir Lavaine, 'for I shall do what I may.' So they rode into the thickest of the press, and smote so hard both with spear and sword that the Knights of the Round Table fell back. 'O mercy!' cried Sir Gawaine, 'what Knight is that yonder who does such marvellous deeds?'

'I know well who it is,' said King Arthur, 'but I will not tell you yet.'

'Sir,' answered Sir Gawaine, 'I should say it was Sir Lancelot by the blows he deals and the manner that he rides, but it cannot be he, for this man has a red sleeve

ELAINE TIES HER SLEEVE ROVND
SIR LANCELOT'S HELMET

upon his helmet, and Sir Lancelot has never borne the token of any lady.'

'Let him be,' said Sir Arthur, 'you will find out his name, and see him do greater deeds yet, before he departs.' And the Knights that were fighting against the King's party took heart again, for before they feared they would be beaten. But when Sir Bors saw this, he called unto him the Knights that were of kin to Sir Lancelot, and they banded together to make a great charge, and threw Sir Lancelot's horse to the ground, and by misfortune the spear of Sir Bors broke, and its head was left in Sir Lancelot's side. When Sir Lavaine saw that, he unhorsed the King of Scots, and brought his horse to Sir Lancelot, and helped him mount thereon and gave him a spear, with which Sir Lancelot smote Sir Bors to the earth and Sir Ector de Maris, the foster-father of King Arthur, and buffeted sorely the Knights that were with them. Afterward he hurled himself into the thick *mêlée* of them all, and did the most wonderful deeds that ever were heard of. And Sir Lavaine likewise did well that day, for he smote down full two Knights of the Round Table. 'Mercy,' again cried Sir Gawaine to Arthur, 'I marvel what Knight that is with the red sleeve.'

'That you shall know soon,' said King Arthur, and commanded that the trumpets should be blown, and declared that the prize belonged to the Knight with the white shield, who bare the red sleeve, for he had unhorsed more than thirty Knights. And the Kings and Lords who were of his party came round him and thanked him for the help he had given them, by which means the honours of the day had been theirs.

'Fair Lords,' said Sir Lancelot, 'if I have deserved thanks, I have paid for them sorely, for I shall hardly escape with my life, therefore I pray you let me depart, for my hurt is grievous.' Then he groaned piteously, and galloped from them to a wood's side, followed by Sir Lavaine. 'Oh help me, Sir Lavaine,' said he, 'to get

this spear's head out of my side, for it is killing me.' But Sir Lavaine feared to touch it, lest Sir Lancelot should bleed to death. 'I charge you,' said Sir Lancelot, 'if you love me draw out the head,' so Sir Lavaine drew it out. And Sir Lancelot gave a great shriek, and a marvellous grisly groan, and his blood flowed out so fast, that he fell into a swoon. 'Oh what shall I do?' cried Sir Lavaine, and he loosed Sir Lancelot's helm and coat of mail, and turned him so that the wind might blow on him, but for full half an hour he lay as if he had been dead. And at last Sir Lancelot opened his eyes, and said, 'O Lavaine, help me on my horse, for two miles from this place there lives a hermit who once was a Knight of the Round Table, and he can heal my wounds.' Then Sir Lavaine, with much ado, helped him on his horse, and brought him bleeding to the hermit. The hermit looked at him as he rode up, leaning piteously on his saddle-bow, and he thought that he should know him, but could not tell who he was for the paleness of his face, till he saw by a wound on his cheek that it was Sir Lancelot.

'You cannot hide your name from me,' said the hermit, 'for you are the noblest Knight in the world, and well I know you to be Sir Lancelot.'

'Since you know me, Sir,' said he, 'help me for God's sake, and for death or life put me out of this pain.'

'Fear nothing,' answered the hermit, 'your pain will soon be gone,' and he called his servants to take the armour off the Knight, and laid him in bed. After that he dressed the wound, and gave him good wine to drink, and Sir Lancelot slept and awoke free of his pain. So we will leave him to be healed of his wound, under the care of the hermit, and go back to King Arthur.

Now it was the custom in those days that after a tourney was finished, a great feast should be held at which both parties were assembled, so King Arthur sent to ask the King of Northgalis, where was the Knight with the red sleeve, who had fought on his side. 'Bring

him before me,' he said, 'that he may have the prize he has won, which is his right.' Then answered the King with the hundred Knights, 'we fear the Knight must have been sore hurt, and that neither you nor we are ever like to see him again, which is grievous to think of.'

'Alas!' said King Arthur, 'is he then so badly wounded? What is his name?'

'Truly,' said they all, 'we know not his name, nor whence he came, nor whither he went.'

'As for me,' answered King Arthur, 'these tidings are the worst that I have heard these seven years, for I would give all the lands I hold that no harm had befallen this Knight.'

'Do you know him?' asked they all.

'Whether I know him or not,' said King Arthur, 'I shall not tell you, but may Heaven send me good news of him.' 'Amen,' answered they.

'By my head,' said Sir Gawaine, 'if this good Knight is really wounded unto death, it is a great evil for all this land, for he is one of the noblest that ever I saw for handling a sword or spear. And if he may be found, I shall find him, for I am sure he is not far from this town,' so he took his squire with him, and they rode all round Camelot, six or seven miles on every side, but nothing could they hear of him. And he returned heavily to the Court of King Arthur.

Two days after the King and all his company set out for London, and by the way, it happened to Sir Gawaine to lodge with Sir Bernard at Astolat. And when he was in his chamber, Sir Bernard and his daughter Elaine came unto Sir Gawaine, to ask him tidings of the Court, and who did best in the tourney at Winchester.

'Truly,' said Sir Gawaine, 'there were two Knights that bare white shields, but one of them had a red sleeve upon his helm, and he was one of the best Knights that ever I saw joust in the field, for I dare say he smote down forty Knights of the Table Round.'

'Now blessed be God,' said the Maid of Astolat, 'that that Knight sped so well, for he is the man in the world that I loved first, and he will also be the last that ever I shall love.'

'Fair maid,' asked Sir Gawaine, 'is that Knight your love?'

'Certainly he is my love,' said she.

'Then you know his name?' asked Sir Gawaine.

'Nay, truly,' answered the damsel, 'I know neither his name, nor whence he cometh, but I love him for all that.'

'How did you meet him first?' asked Sir Gawaine. At that she told him the whole story, and how her brother went with Sir Lancelot to do him service, and lent him the white shield of her brother Sir Tirre and left his own shield with her. 'Why did he do that?' asked Sir Gawaine.

'For this cause,' said the damsel, 'his shield was too well known among many noble Knights.'

'Ah, fair damsel,' said Sir Gawaine, 'I beg of you to let me have a sight of that shield.'

'Sir,' answered she, 'it is in my chamber covered with a case, and if you will come with me, you shall see it.'

'Not so,' said Sir Bernard, and sent his squire for it. And when Sir Gawaine took off the case and beheld the shield, and saw the arms, he knew it to be Sir Lancelot's. 'Ah mercy,' cried he, 'my heart is heavier than ever it was before!'

'Why?' asked Elaine.

'I have great cause,' answered Sir Gawaine. 'Is that Knight who owns this shield your love?'

'Yes, truly,' said she; 'I would I were his love.'

'You are right, fair damsel,' replied Gawaine, 'for if you love him, you love the most honourable Knight in the world. I have known him for four-and-twenty years, and never did I or any other Knight see him wear a token of either lady or damsel at a tournament. Therefore,

damsel, he has paid you great honour. But I fear that I may never behold him again upon earth, and that is grievous to think of.'

'Alas!' she said, 'how may this be? Is he slain?'

'I did not say that,' replied Sir Gawaine, 'but he is sorely wounded, and is more likely to be dead than alive. And, maiden, by this shield I know that he is Sir Lancelot.'

'How can this be?' said the Maid of Astolat, 'and what was his hurt?'

'Truly,' answered Sir Gawaine, 'it was the man that loved him best who hurt him so, and I am sure that if that man knew that it was Sir Lancelot whom he had wounded, he would think it was the darkest deed that ever he did.'

'Now, dear father,' said Elaine, 'give me leave to ride and to seek him, for I shall go out of my mind unless I find him and my brother.'

'Do as you will,' answered her father, 'for I am grieved to hear of the hurt of that noble Knight.' So the damsel made ready.

On the morn Sir Gawaine came to King Arthur and told him how he had found the shield in the keeping of the Maid of Astolat. 'All that I knew beforehand,' said the King, 'and that was why I would not suffer you to fight at the tourney, for I had espied him when he entered his lodging the night before. But this is the first time that ever I heard of his bearing the token of some lady, and much I marvel at it.'

'By my head,' answered Sir Gawaine, 'the Fair Maiden of Astolat loves him wondrous well. What it all means, or what will be the end, I cannot say, but she has ridden after him to seek him.' So the King and his company came to London, and everyone in the Court knew that it was Sir Lancelot who had jousted the best.

And when the tidings came to Sir Bors, his heart grew

heavy, and also the hearts of his kinsmen. But when the Queen heard that Sir Lancelot bore the red sleeve of the Fair Maid of Astolat, she was nearly mad with wrath, and summoned Sir Bors before her in haste.

'Ah, Sir Bors,' she cried when he was come, 'have the tidings reached you that Sir Lancelot has been a false Knight to me?'

'Madam,' answered Sir Bors, 'I pray you say not so, for I cannot hear such language of him.'

'Why, is he not false and a traitor when, after swearing that for right or wrong he would be my Knight and mine only, he bore the red sleeve upon his helm at the great jousts at Camelot?'

'Madam,' said Sir Bors, 'I grieve bitterly as to that sleeve-bearing, but I think he did it that none of his kin should know him. For no man before that had seen him bear the token of any lady, be she what she may.'

'Fie on him!' said the Queen, 'I myself heard Sir Gawaine tell my lord Arthur of the great love that is between the Fair Maiden of Astolat and him.'

'Madam,' answered Sir Bors, 'I cannot hinder Sir Gawaine from saying what he pleases, but as for Sir Lancelot, I am sure that he loves no one lady or maiden better than another. And therefore I will hasten to seek him wherever he be.'

Meanwhile fair Elaine came to Winchester to find Sir Lancelot, who lay in peril of his life in the hermit's dwelling. And when she was riding hither and thither, not knowing where she should turn, she fell on her brother Sir Lavaine, who was exercising his horse. 'How doth my lord Sir Lancelot?' asked she.

'Who told you, sister, that my lord's name was Sir Lancelot?' answered Sir Lavaine.

'Sir Gawaine, who came to my father's house to rest after the tourney, knew him by his shield,' said she, and they rode on till they reached the hermitage, and Sir Lavaine brought her to Sir Lancelot. And when she saw

him so pale, and in such a plight, she fell to the earth in a swoon, but by-and-bye she opened her eyes and said, 'My lord Sir Lancelot, what has brought you to this?' and swooned again. When she came to herself and stood up, Sir Lancelot prayed her to be of good cheer, for if she had come to comfort him she was right welcome, and that his wound would soon heal. 'But I marvel,' said he, 'how you know my name.' Then the maiden told him how Sir Gawaine had been at Astolat and had seen his shield.

'Alas!' sighed Sir Lancelot, 'it grieves me that my name is known, for trouble will come of it.' For he knew full well that Sir Gawaine would tell Queen Guenevere, and that she would be wroth. And Elaine stayed and tended him, and Sir Lancelot begged Sir Lavaine to ride to Winchester and ask if Sir Bors was there, and said that he should know him by token of a wound which Sir Bors had on his forehead. 'For well I am sure,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that Sir Bors will seek me, as he is the same good Knight that hurt me.'

Therefore as Sir Lancelot commanded, Sir Lavaine rode to Winchester and inquired if Sir Bors had been seen there, so that when he entered the town Sir Lavaine readily found him. Sir Bors was overjoyed to hear good tidings of Sir Lancelot, and they rode back together to the hermitage. At the sight of Sir Lancelot lying in his bed, pale and thin, Sir Bors' heart gave way, and he wept long without speaking. 'Oh, my lord Sir Lancelot,' he said at last, 'God send you hasty recovery; great is my shame for having wounded you thus, you who are the noblest Knight in the world. I wonder that my arm would lift itself against you, and I ask your mercy.'

'Fair cousin,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'such words please me not at all, for it is the fault of my pride which would overcome you all, that I lie here to-day. We will not speak of it any more, for what is done cannot be undone, but let us find a cure so that I may soon be

whole.' Then Sir Bors leaned upon his bed, and told him how the Queen was filled with anger against him, because he wore the red sleeve at the jousts.

'I am sorrowful at what you tell me,' replied Sir Lancelot, 'for all I did was to hinder my being known.'

'That I said to excuse you,' answered Sir Bors, 'though it was all in vain. But is this damsel that is so busy about you the Fair Maid of Astolat?'

'She it is, and she will not go from me!'

'Why should she go from you?' asked Sir Bors. 'She is a passing fair damsel, and of gentle breeding, and I would that you could love her, for it is easy to see by her bearing that she loves you entirely.'

'It grieves me to hear that,' said Sir Lancelot.

After this they talked of other things, till in a few days Sir Lancelot's wounds were whole again. When Sir Lancelot felt his strength return, Sir Bors made him ready, and departed for the Court of King Arthur, and told them how he had left Sir Lancelot. And there was on All Hallows a great tournament, and Sir Bors won the prize for the unhorsing of twenty Knights, and Sir Gareth did great deeds also, but vanished suddenly from the field, and no man knew where he had gone. After the tourney was over, Sir Bors rode to the hermitage to see Sir Lancelot, whom he found walking on his feet, and on the next morning they bade farewell to the hermit, taking with them Elaine le Blanc. They went first to Astolat, where they were well lodged in the house of Sir Bernard, but when the morrow came, and Sir Lancelot would have departed from them, Elaine called to her father and to her brothers Sir Tirre and Sir Lavaine, and thus she said:

'My lord Sir Lancelot, fair Knight, leave me not, I pray you, but have mercy upon me, and suffer me not to die of love of thee.'

'What do you wish me to do?' asked Sir Lancelot.

'I would have you for my husband,' answered she.

'Fair damsel, I thank you,' said Sir Lancelot, 'but truly I shall never have a wife. But in token and thanks of all your good will towards me, gladly will I give a thousand pounds yearly when you set your heart upon some other Knight.'

'Of such gifts I will have none,' answered Elaine, 'and I would have you know, Sir Lancelot, that if you refuse to wed me, my good days are done.'

'Fair damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I cannot do the thing that you ask.'

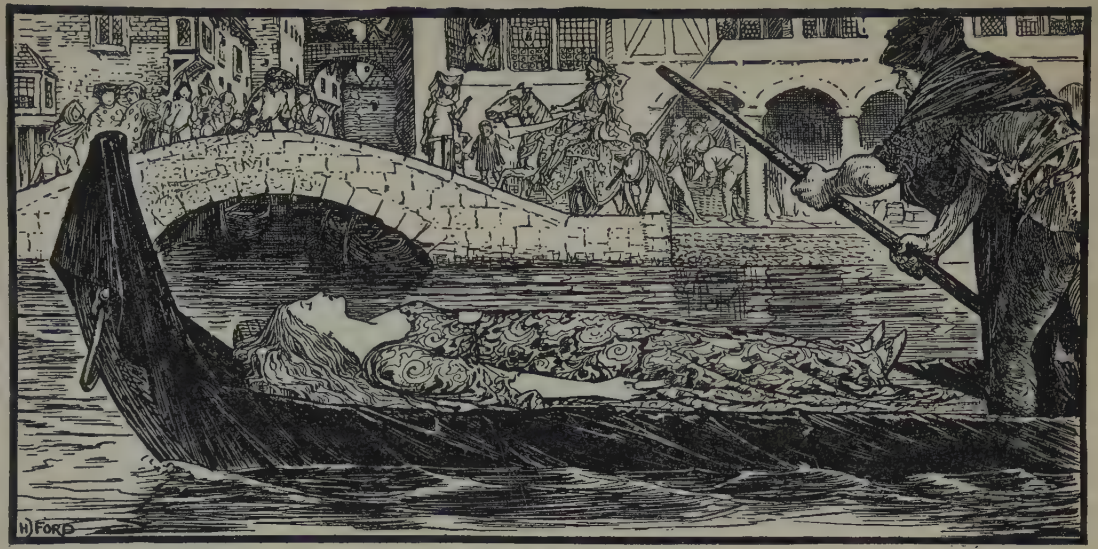
At these words she fell down in a swoon, and her maids bore her to her chamber, where she made bitter sorrow. Sir Lancelot thought it would be well for him to depart before she came to her senses again, and he asked Sir Lavaine what he would do.

'What should I do?' asked Sir Lavaine, 'but follow you if you will have me.' Then Sir Bernard came and said to Sir Lancelot, 'I see well that my daughter Elaine will die for your sake.'

'I cannot marry her,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'and it grieves me sorely, for she is a good maiden, fair and gentle.'

'Father,' said Sir Lavaine, 'she is as pure and good as Sir Lancelot has said, and she is like me, for since first I saw him I can never leave him.' And after that they bade the old man farewell and came unto Winchester, where the King and all the Knights of the Round Table made great joy of him, save only Sir Agrawaine and Sir Mordred. But the Queen was angry and would not speak to him, though he tried by all means to make her. Now when the Fair Maid of Astolat knew he was gone, she would neither eat nor sleep, but cried after Sir Lancelot all the day long. And when she had spent ten days in this manner, she grew so weak that they thought her soul must quit this world, and the priest came to her, and bade her dwell no more on earthly things. She would not listen to him, but cried ever after

Sir Lancelot, and how she had loved none other, no, nor ever would, and that her love would be her death. Then she called her father, Sir Bernard, and her brother, Sir Tirre, and begged her brother to write her a letter as she should tell him, and her father that he would have her watched till she was dead. 'And while my body is warm,' said she, 'let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until I be cold, and let me be dressed in my richest clothes and be lain on a fair bed, and driven in a chariot to the Thames. There let me be put on a barge, and a dumb man with me, to steer the barge, which shall be covered over with black samite. Thus, father, I beseech you, let it be done.' And her father promised her faithfully that so it should be done to her when she was dead. Next day she died, and her body was lain on the bed, and placed in a chariot, and driven to the Thames, where the man awaited her with the barge. When she was put on board, he steered the barge to Westminster and rowed a great while to and fro, before any espied it. At last King Arthur and Queen Guenevere withdrew into a window to speak together, and espied the black barge, and wondered greatly what it meant. The King summoned Sir Kay, and bade him take Sir Brandiles and Sir Agrawaine, and find out who was lying there, and they ran down to the river side, and came and told the King. 'That fair corpse will I see,' returned the King, and he took the Queen's hand and led her thither. Then he ordered the barge to be made fast, and he entered it, and the Queen likewise, and certain Knights with them. And there he saw a fair woman on a rich bed, and her clothing was of cloth of gold, and she lay smiling. While they looked, all being silent, the Queen spied a letter in her right hand, and pointed it out to the King, who took it saying, 'Now I am sure this letter will tell us what she was, and why she came hither.' So leaving the barge in charge of a trusty man, they went into the King's chamber, followed by many



THE BLACK BARGET

Knights, for the King would have the letter read openly. He then broke the seal himself, and bade a clerk read it, and this was what it said:

'Most noble Knight Sir Lancelot, I was your lover, whom men called the Fair Maid of Astolat: therefore unto all ladies I make my moan; yet pray for my soul, and bury me. This is my last request. Pray for my soul, Sir Lancelot, as thou art peerless.'

This was all the letter, and the King and Queen and all the Knights wept when they heard it.

'Let Sir Lancelot be sent for,' presently said the King, and when Sir Lancelot came the letter was read to him also.

'My lord Arthur,' said he, after he had heard it all, 'I am right grieved at the death of this damsel. God knows I was not, of my own will, guilty of her death, and that I will call on her brother, Sir Lavaine, to witness. She was both fair and good, and much was I beholden to her, but she loved me out of measure.'

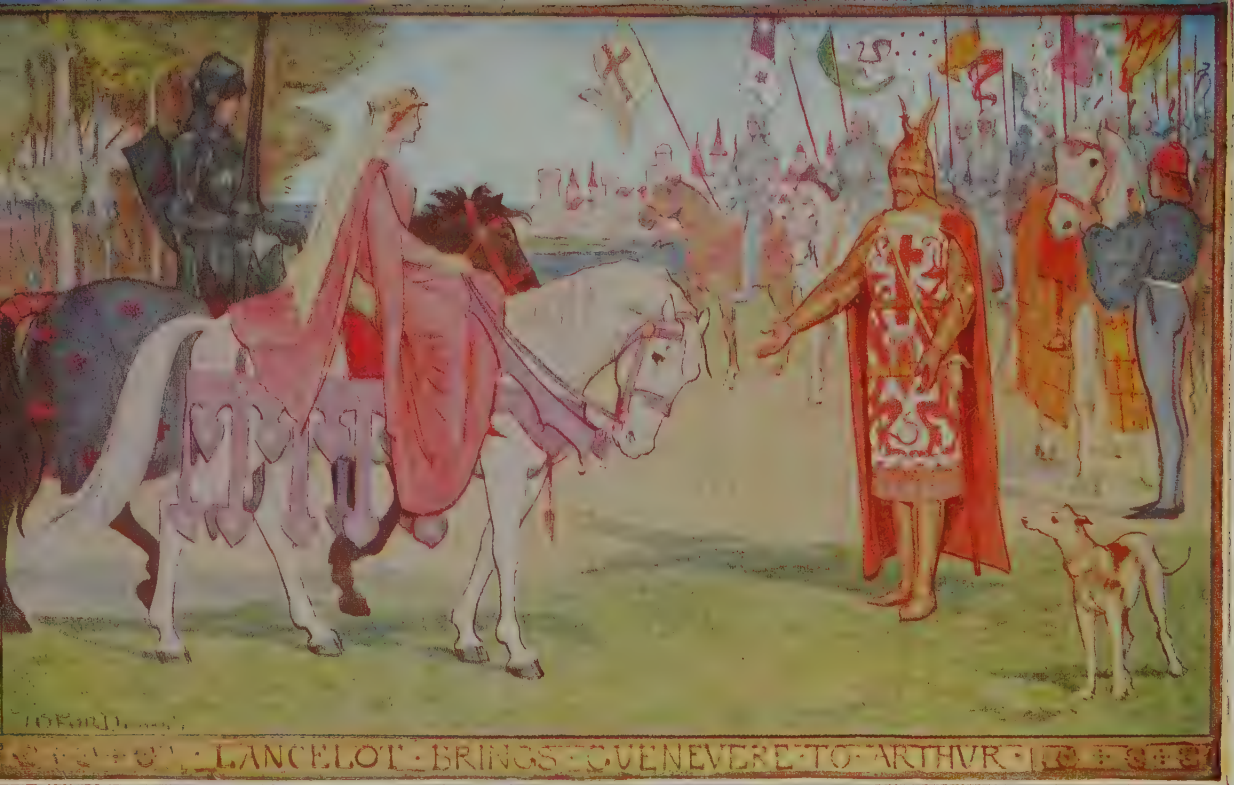
'You might have been a little gentle with her,' answered the Queen, 'and have found some way to save her life.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'she would have nothing but my love, and that I could not give her, though I offered her a thousand pounds yearly if she should set her heart on any other Knight. For, Madam, I love not to be forced to love; love must arise of itself, and not by command.'

'That is truth,' replied the King, 'love is free in himself, and never will be bounden; for where he is bounden he looseth himself. But, Sir Lancelot, be it your care to see that the damsel is buried as is fitting.'

LANCELOT AND GUENEVERE

Now we come to the sorrowful tale of Lancelot and Guenevere, and of the death of King Arthur. Already it has been told that King Arthur had wedded Guenevere, the daughter of Leodegrance, King of Cornwall, a damsel who seemed made of all the flowers, so fair was she, and slender, and brilliant to look upon. And the Knights in her father's Court bowed down before her, and smote their hardest in the jousts where Guenevere was present, but none dared ask her in marriage till Arthur came. Like the rest he saw and loved her, but, unlike them, he was a King, and might lift his eyes even unto Guenevere. The maiden herself scarcely saw or spoke to him, but did her father's bidding in all things, and when he desired her to make everything ready to go clothed as beseemed a Princess to King Arthur's Court, her heart beat with joy at the sight of rich stuffs and shining jewels. Then one day there rode up to the Castle a band of horsemen sent by the King to bring her to his Court, and at the head of them Sir Lancelot du Lake, friend of King Arthur, and winner of all the jousts and tournaments where Knights meet to gain honour. Day by day they rode together apart and he told her tales of gallant deeds done for love of beautiful ladies, and they passed under trees gay with the first green of spring, and over hyacinths covering the earth with sheets of blue, till at sunset they drew rein before the silken pavilion, with the banner of Uther Pendragon floating on the top. And Guenevere's heart went out to Lancelot before she knew.


LANCELOT BRINGS GUENEVERE TO ARTHUR

One evening she noted, far across the plain, towers and buildings shining in the sun, and an array of horsemen ride forth to meet her. One stopped before her dazzled eyes, and leaping from his horse bowed low. Arthur had come to welcome her, and do her honour, and to lead her home. But looking up at him, she thought him cold, and, timid and alone, her thoughts turned again to Lancelot. After that the days and years slipped by, and these two were ever nearest the King, and in every time of danger the King cried for Lancelot, and trusted his honour and the Queen's to him. Sir Lancelot spoke truly when he told Elaine that he had never worn the badge of lady or maiden, but for all that every one looked on Sir Lancelot as the Queen's Knight, who could do no worship to any other woman. The King likewise held Sir Lancelot bound to fight the Queen's battles, and if he was absent on adventures of his own, messengers hastened to bring him back, as in the fight with Sir Mador. So things went on for many years, and the King never guessed that the Queen loved Lancelot best.

It befell one spring, in the month of May, that Queen Guenevere bethought herself that she would like to go a-maying in the woods and fields that lay round the City of Westminster on both sides of the river. To this intent she called her own especial Knights, and bade them be ready the next morning clothed all in green, whether of silk or cloth, 'and,' said she, 'I shall bring with me ten ladies, and every Knight shall have a lady behind him, and be followed by a squire and two yeomen, and I will that you shall all be well horsed.' Thus it was done, and the ten Knights, arrayed in fresh green, the emblem of the spring, rode with the Queen and her ladies in the early dawn, and smelt the sweet of the year, and gathered flowers which they stuck in their girdles and doublets. The Queen was as happy and light of heart as the youngest maiden, but she had promised to be with the King at the hour of ten, and gave the signal for

departure unwillingly. The Knights were mounting their horses, when suddenly out of a wood on the other side rode Sir Meliagraunce, who for many years had loved the Queen, and had sought an occasion to carry her off, but found none so fair as this. Out of the forest he rode, with two score men in armour, and a hundred archers behind him, and bade the Queen and her followers stay where they were, or they would fare badly. 'Traitor,' cried the Queen, 'what evil deed would you do? You are a King's son and a Knight of the Round Table, yet you seek to shame the man who gave you knighthood. But I tell you that you may bring dishonour on yourself, but you will bring none on me, for rather would I cut my throat in twain.'

'As for your threats, Madam, I pay them no heed,' returned Sir Meliagraunce; 'I have loved you many a year, and never could I get you at such an advantage as I do now, and therefore I will take you as I find you.' Then all the Knights spoke together saying, 'Sir Meliagraunce, bethink yourself that in attacking men who are unarmed you put not only our lives in peril but your own honour. Rather than allow the Queen to be shamed we will each one fight to the death, and if we did aught else we should dishonour our knighthood for ever.'

'Fight as well as you can,' answered Sir Meliagraunce, 'and keep the Queen if you may.' So the Knights of the Round Table drew their swords, and the men of Sir Meliagraunce ran at them with spears; but the Knights stood fast, and clove the spears in two before they touched them. Then both sides fought with swords, and Sir Kay and five other Knights were felled to the ground with wounds all over their bodies. The other four fought long, and slew forty of the men and archers of Sir Meliagraunce; but in the end they too were overcome. When the Queen saw that she cried out for pity and sorrow, 'Sir Meliagraunce, spare my noble Knights and

I will go with you quietly on this condition, that their lives be saved, and that wherever you may carry me they shall follow. For I give you warning that I would rather slay myself than go with you without my Knights, whose duty it is to guard me.'

'Madam,' replied Sir Meliagraunce, 'for your sake they shall be led with you into my own castle, if you will consent to ride with me.' So the Queen prayed the four Knights to fight no more, and she and they would not part, and to this, though their hearts were heavy, they agreed.

The fight being ended the wounded Knights were placed on horseback, some sitting, some lying across the saddle, according as they were hurt, and Sir Meliagraunce forbade anyone to leave the castle (which had been a gift to him from King Arthur), for sore he dreaded the vengeance of Sir Lancelot if this thing should reach his ears. But the Queen knew well what was passing in his mind, and she called a little page who served her in her chamber and desired him to take her ring and hasten with all speed to Sir Lancelot, 'and pray him, if he loves me, to rescue me. Spare not your horse, neither for water nor for land.' And the boy bided his time, then mounted his horse, and rode away as fast as he might. Sir Meliagraunce spied him as he flew, and knew whither he went, and who had sent him; and he commanded his best archers to ride after him and shoot him ere he reached Sir Lancelot. But the boy escaped their arrows, and vanished from their sight. Then Sir Meliagraunce said to the Queen, 'You seek to betray me, Madam; but Sir Lancelot shall not so lightly come at you.' And he bade his men follow him to the castle in haste, and left an ambush of thirty archers in the road, charging them that if a Knight mounted on a white horse came along that way they were to slay the horse but to leave the man alone, as he was hard to overcome. After Sir Meliagraunce had given these orders his company galloped fast to the castle; but the Queen would

listen to nothing that he said, demanding always that her Knights and ladies should be lodged with her, and Sir Meliagraunce was forced to let her have her will.

GUENEVERE SENDS HER PAGE TO LANCELOT FOR HELP

The castle of Sir Meliagraunce was distant seven miles from Westminster, so it did not take long for the boy to find Sir Lancelot, and to give him the Queen's ring and her message. 'I am shamed for ever,' said Sir Lancelot, 'unless I can rescue that noble lady,' and while he put on his armour, he called to the boy to tell him the whole adventure. When he was armed and mounted, he begged the page to warn Sir Lavaine where he had gone, and for what cause. 'And pray him, as he loves me, that he follow me to the castle of Sir Meliagraunce, for if I am a living man, he will find me there.'

Sir Lancelot put his horse into the water at Westminster, and he swam straight over to Lambeth, and soon after he landed he found traces of the fight. He rode along the track till he came to the wood, where the archers were lying waiting for him, and when they saw him, they bade him on peril of his life to go no further along that path.

'Why should I, who am a Knight of the Round Table, turn out of any path that pleases me?' asked Sir Lancelot.

'Either you will leave this path or your horse will be slain,' answered the archers.

'You may slay my horse if you will,' said Sir Lancelot, 'but when my horse is slain I shall fight you on foot, and so would I do, if there were five hundred more of you.' With that they smote the horse with their arrows, but Sir Lancelot jumped off, and ran into the wood, and they could not catch him. He went on some way, but the ground was rough, and his armour was heavy, and sore he dreaded the treason of Sir Meliagraunce. His heart was near to fail him, when there passed by a cart with two carters that came to fetch wood. 'Tell me, carter,' asked Sir Lancelot, 'what will you take to suffer me to go in your cart till we are within two miles of the castle of Sir Meliagraunce?'

'I cannot take you at all,' answered the carter, 'for I am come to fetch wood for my lord Sir Meliagraunce.'

'It is with him that I would speak.'

'You shall not go with me,' said the carter, but hardly had he uttered the words when Sir Lancelot leapt up into the cart, and gave him such a buffet that he fell dead on the ground. At this sight the other carter cried that he would take the Knight where he would if he would only spare his life. 'Then I charge you,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that you bring me to the castle gate.' So the carter drove at a great gallop, and Sir Lancelot's horse, who had espied his master, followed the cart, though more than fifty arrows were standing in his body. In an hour and a half they reached the castle gate, and were seen of Guenevere and her ladies, who were standing in a window. 'Look, Madam,' cried one of her ladies, 'in that cart yonder is a goodly armed Knight. I suppose he is going to his hanging.'

'Where?' asked the Queen, and as she spoke she espied that it was Sir Lancelot, and that his horse was following riderless. 'Well is he that has a trusty friend,' said she, 'for a noble Knight is hard pressed when he rides in a cart,' and she rebuked the lady who had declared he was going to his hanging. 'It was foul talking, to liken the noblest Knight in the world to one going to a shameful death.' By this Sir Lancelot had come to the gate of the castle, and he got down and called till the castle rang with his voice. 'Where is that false traitor Sir Meliagraunce, Knight of the Round Table? Come forth, you and your company, for I, Sir Lancelot du Lake, am here to do battle with you.' Then he burst the gate open wide, and smote the porter who tried to hold it against him. When Sir Meliagraunce heard Sir Lancelot's voice, he ran into Queen Guenevere's chamber, and fell on his knees before her: 'Mercy, Madam, mercy! I throw myself upon your grace.'

'What ails you now?' said she; 'of a truth I might

THE ARCHERS THREATEN LANCELOT

well expect some good Knight to avenge me, though my lord Arthur knew not of your work.'

'Madam, I will make such amends as you yourself may desire,' pleaded Sir Meliagraunce, 'and I trust wholly to your grace.'

'What would you have me do?' asked the Queen.

'Rule in this castle as if it were your own, and give Sir Lancelot cheer till to-morrow, and then you shall all return to Westminster.'

'You say well,' answered the Queen. 'Peace is ever better than war, and I take no pleasure in fighting.' So she went down with her ladies to Sir Lancelot, who still stood full of rage in the inner court, calling as before, 'Traitor Knight, come forth!'

'Sir Lancelot,' asked the Queen, 'what is the cause of all this wrath?'

'Madam,' replied Sir Lancelot, 'does such a question come from you? Methinks your wrath should be greater than mine, for all the hurt and the dishonour have fallen upon you. My own hurt is but little, but the shame is worse than any hurt.'

'You say truly,' replied the Queen, 'but you must come in with me peaceably, as all is put into my hand, and the Knight repents bitterly of his adventure.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'since you have made agreement with him, it is not my part to say nay, although Sir Meliagraunce has borne himself both shamefully and cowardly towards me. But had I known you would have pardoned him so soon, I should not have made such haste to come to you.'

'Why do you say that?' asked the Queen; 'do you repent yourself of your good deeds? I only made peace with him to have done with all this noise of slanderous talk, and for the sake of my Knights.'

'Madam,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'you understand full well that I was never glad of slander nor noise, but there is neither King, Queen nor Knight alive, save your-

self, Madam, and my lord Arthur, that should hinder me from giving Sir Meliagraunce a cold heart before I departed hence.'

'That I know well,' said the Queen, 'but what would you have more? Everything shall be ordered as you will.'

'Madam,' replied Sir Lancelot, 'as long as you are pleased, that is all I care for,' so the Queen led Sir Lancelot into her chamber, and commanded him to take off his armour, and then took him to where her ten Knights were lying sore wounded. And their souls leapt with joy when they saw him, and he told them how falsely Sir Meliagraunce had dealt with him, and had set archers to slay his horse, so that he was fain to place himself in a cart. Thus they complained each to the other, and would have avenged themselves on Sir Meliagraunce but for the peace made by the Queen. And in the evening came Sir Lavaine, riding in great haste, and Sir Lancelot was glad that he was come.

Now Sir Lancelot was right when he feared to trust Sir Meliagraunce, for that Knight only sought to work ill both to him and to the Queen, for all his fair words. And first he began to speak evil of the Queen to Sir Lancelot, who dared him to prove his foul words, and it was settled between them that a combat should take place in eight days in the field near Westminster. 'And now,' said Sir Meliagraunce, 'since it is decided that we must fight together, I beseech you, as you are a noble Knight, do me no treason nor villainy in the meantime.'

'Any Knight will bear me witness,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'that never have I broken faith with any man, nor borne fellowship with those that have done so.' 'Then let us go to dinner,' said Sir Meliagraunce, 'and afterwards you may all ride to Westminster. Meanwhile would it please you to see the inside of this castle?' 'That I will gladly,' said Sir Lancelot, and they went from chamber to chamber, till they reached the floor of

the castle, and as he went Sir Lancelot trod on a trap, and the board rolled, and he fell down in a cave which was filled with straw, and Sir Meliagraunce departed and no man knew where Sir Lancelot might be. The Queen bethought herself that he was wont to disappear suddenly, and as Sir Meliagraunce had first removed Sir Lavaine's horse from the place where it had been tethered, the Knights agreed with her. So time passed till dinner had been eaten, and then Sir Lavaine demanded litters for the wounded Knights, that they might be carried to Westminster with as little hurt as might be. And the Queen and her ladies followed. When they arrived, the Knights told of their adventure, and how Sir Meliagraunce had accused the Queen of treason, and how he and Sir Lancelot were to fight for her good name in eight days.

'Sir Meliagraunce has taken a great deal upon him,' said the King, 'but where is Sir Lancelot?'

'Sir,' answered they all, 'we know not, but we think he has ridden to some adventure.' 'Well, leave him alone,' said the King. 'He will be here when the day comes, unless some treason has befallen him.'

All this while Sir Lancelot was lying in great pain within the cave, and he would have died for lack of food had not one of the ladies in the castle found out the place where he was held captive, and brought him meat and drink, and hoped that he might be brought to love her. But he would not. 'Sir Lancelot,' said she, 'you are not wise, for without my help you will never get out of this prison, and if you do not appear on the day of battle, your lady, Queen Guenevere, will be burnt in default.' 'If I am not there,' replied Sir Lancelot, 'the King and the Queen and all men of worship will know that I am either dead or in prison. And sure I am that there is some good Knight who loves me or is of my kin, that will take my quarrel in hand, therefore you cannot frighten me by such words as these. If there was not another woman in the world, I could give you no different

answer.' 'Then you will be shamed openly,' replied the lady, and left the dungeon. But on the day that the battle was to be fought she came again, and said, 'Sir Lancelot, if you will only kiss me once, I will deliver you, and give you the best horse in Sir Meliagraunce's stable.' 'Yes, I will kiss you,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'since I may do that honourably; but if I thought it were any shame to kiss you, I would not do it, whatever the cost.' So he kissed her, and she brought him his armour, and led him to a stable where twelve noble horses stood, and bade him choose the best. He chose a white courser, and bade the keepers put on the best saddle they had, and with his spear in his hand and his sword by his side, he rode away, thanking the lady for all she had done for him, which some day he would try to repay.

As the hours passed on and Sir Lancelot did not come, Sir Meliagraunce called ever on King Arthur to burn the Queen, or else bring forth Sir Lancelot, for he deemed full well that he had Sir Lancelot safe in his dungeon. The King and Queen were sore distressed that Sir Lancelot was missing, and knew not where to look for him, and what to do. Then stepped forth Sir Lavaine and said, 'My lord Arthur, you know well that some ill-fortune has happened to Sir Lancelot, and if he is not dead, he is either sick or in prison. Therefore I beseech you, let me do battle instead of my lord and master for my lady the Queen.'

'I thank you heartily, gentle Knight,' answered Arthur, 'for I am sure that Sir Meliagraunce accuses the Queen falsely, and there is not one of the ten Knights who would not fight for her were it not for his wounds. So do your best, for it is plain that some evil has been wrought on Sir Lancelot.' Sir Lavaine was filled with joy when the King gave him leave to do battle with Sir Meliagraunce, and rode swiftly to his place at the end of the lists. And just as the heralds were about to cry 'Lesses les aler!' Sir Lancelot dashed into the middle

on his white horse. 'Hold and abide!' commanded the King, and Sir Lancelot rode up before him, and told before them all how Sir Meliagraunce had treated him. When the King and Queen and all the Lords heard Sir Lancelot's tale, their hearts stirred within them with anger, and the Queen took her seat by the King, in great trust of her champion. Sir Lancelot and Sir Meliagraunce prepared themselves for battle, and took their spears, and came together as thunder, and Sir Lancelot bore Sir Meliagraunce right over his horse. Then Sir Lancelot jumped down, and they fought on foot, till in the end Sir Meliagraunce was smitten to the ground by a blow on his head from his enemy. 'Most noble Knight, save my life,' cried he, 'for I yield myself unto you, and put myself into the King's hands and yours.' Sir Lancelot did not know what to answer, for he longed above anything in the world to have revenge upon him; so he looked at the Queen to see whether she would give him any sign of what she would have done. The Queen wagged her head in answer, and Sir Lancelot knew by that token that she would have him dead, and he understood, and bade Sir Meliagraunce get up, and continue the fight. 'Nay,' said Sir Meliagraunce, 'I will never rise till you accept my surrender.' 'Listen,' answered Sir Lancelot. 'I will leave my head and left side bare, and my left arm shall be bound behind me, and in this guise I will fight with you.' At this Sir Meliagraunce started to his feet, and cried, 'My lord Arthur, take heed to this offer, for I will take it, therefore let him be bound and unarmed as he has said.' So the Knights disarmed Sir Lancelot, first his head and then his side, and his left hand was bound behind his back, in such a manner that he could not use his shield, and full many a Knight and lady marvelled that Sir Lancelot would risk himself so. And Sir Meliagraunce lifted his sword on high and would have smitten Sir Lancelot on his bare head, had he not leapt lightly to one side, and, before Sir Meliagraunce could right himself,

Sir Lancelot had struck him so hard upon his helmet that his skull split in two, and there was nothing left to do but to carry his dead body from the field. And because the Knights of the Round Table begged to have him honourably buried, the King agreed thereto, and on his tomb mention was made of how he came by his death, and who slew him. After this Sir Lancelot was more cherished by the King and Queen than ever he was before.

Among the many Knights at Arthur's Court who owned Kings for their fathers were Sir Mordred and Sir Agrawaine, who had for brothers, Sir Gawaine, Sir Gaheris, and Sir Gareth. And their mother was Queen of Orkney, sister to King Arthur. Now Sir Agrawaine and Sir Mordred had evil natures, and loved both to invent slanders and to repeat them. And at this time they were full of envy of the noble deeds Sir Lancelot had done, and how men called him the bravest Knight of the Table Round, and said that he was the friend of the King, and the sworn defender of the Queen. So they cast about how they might ruin him, and found the way by putting jealous thoughts into the mind of Arthur.

As was told in the tale of the marriage of Arthur, Queen Guenevere's heart had gone out to Lancelot, on the journey to the Court, and ever she loved to have him with her. This was known well to Sir Mordred, who watched eagerly for a chance to work her ill.

It came one day when Arthur proclaimed a hunt, and Sir Mordred guessed that Sir Lancelot, who did not love hunting, would stay behind, and would spend the time holding talk with the Queen. Therefore he went to the King and began to speak evil of the Queen and Sir Lancelot. At first King Arthur would listen to nothing, but slowly his jealousy burned within him, and he let the ill words that accused the Queen of loving Sir Lancelot the best, sink into his mind, and told Sir Mordred and Sir Agrawaine that they might do their worst, and he would not meddle

with them. But they let so many of their fellowship into the secret of their foul plot, that at last it came to the ears of Sir Bors, who begged Sir Lancelot not to go near the Queen that day, or harm would come of it. But Sir Lancelot answered that the Queen had sent for him, and that she was his liege lady, and never would he hold back when she summoned him to her presence. Therefore Sir Bors went heavily away. By ill fortune, Sir Lancelot only wore his sword under his great mantle, and scarcely had he passed inside the door when Sir Agrawaine and Sir Mordred, and twelve other Knights of the Table Round, all armed and ready for battle, cried loudly upon Sir Lancelot, that all the Court might hear.

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'is there any armour within your chamber that I might cover my body withal, for if I was armed as they are I would soon crush them?'

'Alas!' replied the Queen, 'I have neither sword nor spear nor armour, and how can you resist them? You will be slain and I shall be burnt. If you could only escape their hands, I know you would deliver me from danger.'

'It is grievous,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that I who was never conquered in all my life should be slain for lack of armour.'

'Traitor Knight,' cried Sir Mordred again, 'come out and fight us, for you are so sore beset that you cannot escape us.'

'Oh, mercy,' cried Sir Lancelot, 'I may not suffer longer this shame and noise! For better were death at once than to endure this pain.' Then he took the Queen in his arms and kissed her, and said, 'Most noble Christian Queen, I beseech you, as you have ever been my special good lady, and I at all times your true poor Knight, and as I never failed you in right or in wrong, since the first day that King Arthur made me Knight, that you will pray for my soul, if I be here slain. For I am well assured that Sir Bors, my nephew, and Sir Lavaine and many more, will rescue you from the fire, and therefore,

mine own lady, comfort yourself whatever happens to me, and go with Sir Bors, my nephew, and you shall live like a Queen on my lands.'

LANCELOT COMES OVT OF GVENEVERE'S ROOM

'Nay, Lancelot,' said the Queen, 'I will never live after your days, but if you are slain I will take my death as meekly as ever did any Christian Queen.'

'Well, Madam,' answered Lancelot, 'since it is so I shall sell my life as dear as I may, and a thousandfold I am more heavy for you than for myself.'

Therewith Sir Lancelot wrapped his mantle thickly round his arm, and stood beside the door, which the Knights without were trying to break in by aid of a stout wooden form.

'Fair Lords,' said Sir Lancelot, 'leave this noise, and I will open the door, and you may do with me what you will.'

'Open it then,' answered they, 'for well you know you cannot escape us, and we will save your life and bring you before King Arthur.' So Sir Lancelot opened the door and held it with his left hand, so that but one man could come in at once. Then came forward a strong Knight, Sir Colgrevance of Gore, who struck fiercely at Lancelot with his sword. But Sir Lancelot stepped on one side, that the blow fell harmless, and with his arm he gave Sir Colgrevance a buffet on the head so that he fell dead. And Sir Lancelot drew him into the chamber, and barred the door.

Hastily he unbuckled the dead Knight's armour, and the Queen and her ladies put it on him, Sir Agrawaine and Sir Mordred ever calling to him the while, 'Traitor Knight, come out of that chamber!' But Sir Lancelot cried to them all to go away and he would appear next morning before the King, and they should accuse him of what they would, and he would answer them, and prove his words in battle. 'Fie on you, traitor,' said Sir Agrawaine, 'we have you in our power, to save or to slay, for King Arthur will listen to our words, and will believe what we tell him.'

'As you like,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'look to yourself,' and he flung open the chamber door, and strode in amongst them and killed Sir Agrawaine with his first blow, and in a few minutes the bodies of the other twelve Knights lay on the ground beside his, for no man ever

withstood that buffet of Sir Lancelot's. He wounded Sir Mordred also, so that he fled away with all his might. When the clamour of the battle was still, Sir Lancelot turned back to the Queen and said, 'Alas, Madam, they will make King Arthur my foe, and yours also, but if you will come with me to my castle, I will save you from all dangers.'

'I will not go with you now,' answered the Queen, 'but if you see to-morrow that they will burn me to death, then you may deliver me as you shall think best.'

'While I live I will deliver you,' said Sir Lancelot, and he left her and went back to his lodging. When Sir Bors, who was awaiting him, saw Sir Lancelot, he was gladder than he ever had been in his whole life before. 'Mercy!' cried Sir Lancelot, 'why you are all armed!'

'Sir,' answered Sir Bors, 'after you had left us I and your friends and your kinsmen were so troubled that we felt some great strife was at hand, and that perchance some trap had been laid for you. So we put on armour that we might help you whatever need you were in.'

'Fair nephew,' said Lancelot, 'but now I have been more hardly beset than ever I was in my life, and yet I escaped,' and he told them all that had happened. 'I pray you, my fellows, that you will be of good courage and stand by me in my need, for war is come to us all.'

'Sir,' answered Sir Bors, 'all is welcome that God sends us, and we have had much good with you and much fame, so now we will take the bad as we have taken the good.' And so said they all.

'I thank you for your comfort in my great distress,' replied Sir Lancelot, 'and you, fair nephew, haste to the Knights which be in this place, and find who is with me and who is against me, for I would know my friends from my foes.'

'Sir,' said Sir Bors, 'before seven of the clock in the morning you shall know.'

By seven o'clock, as Sir Bors had promised, many

noble Knights stood before Sir Lancelot, and were sworn to his cause. 'My Lords,' said he, 'you know well that since I came into this country I have given faithful service unto my lord King Arthur and unto my lady Queen Guenevere. Last evening my lady, the Queen, sent for me to speak to her, and certain Knights that were lying in wait for me cried "Treason," and much ado I had to escape their blows. But I slew twelve of them, and Sir Agrawaine, who is Sir Gawaine's brother; and for this cause I am sure of mortal war, as these Knights were ordered by King Arthur to betray me, and therefore the Queen will be judged to the fire, and I may not suffer that she should be burnt for my sake.'

And Sir Bors answered Sir Lancelot that it was truly his part to rescue the Queen, as he had done so often before, and that if she was burned the shame would be his. Then they all took counsel together how the thing might best be done, and Sir Bors deemed it wise to carry her off to the Castle of Joyous Gard, and counselled that she should be kept there, a prisoner, till the King's anger was past and he would be willing to welcome her back again. To this the other Knights agreed, and by the advice of Sir Lancelot they hid themselves in a wood close by the town till they saw what King Arthur would do. Meanwhile Sir Mordred, who had managed to escape the sword of Sir Lancelot, rode, wounded and bleeding, unto King Arthur, and told the King all that had passed, and how, of the fourteen Knights, he only was left alive. The King grieved sore at his tale, which Sir Mordred had made to sound as ill as was possible; for, in spite of all, Arthur loved Sir Lancelot. 'It is a bitter blow,' he said, 'that Sir Lancelot must be against me, and the fellowship of the Table Round is broken for ever, as many a noble Knight will go with him. And as I am the judge, the Queen will have to die, as she is the cause of the death of these thirteen Knights.'

'My lord Arthur,' said Sir Gawaine, 'be not over-

hasty; listen not to the foul tongue of Sir Mordred, who laid this trap for Sir Lancelot, that we all know to be the Queen's own Knight, who has done battle for her when none else would. As for Sir Lancelot, he will prove the right on the body of any Knight living that shall accuse him of wrong — either him, or my lady Guenevere.'

'That I believe well,' said King Arthur, 'for he trusts so much in his own might that he fears no man; and never more shall he fight for the Queen, for she must suffer death by the law. Put on, therefore, your best armour, and go with your brothers, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, and bring the Queen to the fire, there to have her judgment and suffer her death.'

'Nay, my lord, that I will never do,' cried Sir Gawaine; 'my heart will never serve me to see her die, and I will never stand by and see so noble a lady brought to a shameful end.'

'Then,' said the King, 'let your brothers, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, be there.'

'My lord,' replied Sir Gawaine, 'I know well how loth they will be, but they are young and unable to say you nay.'

At this Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth spoke to King Arthur: 'Sir, if you command us we will obey, but it will be sore against our will. And if we go we shall be dressed as men of peace, and wear no armour.'

'Make yourselves ready, then,' answered the King, 'for I would delay no longer in giving judgment.'

'Alas!' cried Sir Gawaine, 'that I should have lived to see this day'; and he turned and wept bitterly, and went into his chamber.

So the Queen was led outside the gates, and her rich dress was taken off, while her lords and ladies wrung their hands in grief, and few men wore armour, for in that day it was held that the presence of mail-clad Knights made death more shameful. Now among those present was one sent

by Sir Lancelot, and when he saw the Queen's dress unclasped, and the priest step forth to listen to her confession, he rode to warn Sir Lancelot that the hour had come. And suddenly there was heard a sound as of rushing horses, and Sir Lancelot dashed up to the fire, and all the Knights that stood around were slain, for few men wore armour. Sir Lancelot looked not where he struck, and Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth were found in the thickest of the throng. At last he reached the Queen, and, throwing a mantle over her, he caught her on to his saddle and rode away with her. Right thankful was the Queen at being snatched from the fire, and her heart was grateful to Sir Lancelot, who took her to his Castle of Joyous Gard, and many noble Knights and Kings had fellowship with them.

After King Arthur had given judgment for the Queen to die he went back into his palace of Westminster, where men came and told him how Sir Lancelot had delivered her, and of the death of his Knights, and in especial of Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, and he swooned away from sorrow. 'Alas!' he cried, when he recovered from his swoon, 'alas! that a crown was ever on my head, for in these two days I have lost forty Knights and the fellowship of Sir Lancelot and his kinsmen, and never more will they be of my company. But I charge you that none tell Sir Gawaine of the death of his brothers, for I am sure that when he hears of Sir Gareth he will go out of his mind. Oh, why did Sir Lancelot slay them? for Sir Gareth loved Sir Lancelot more than any other man.'

'That is true,' answered some of the Knights, 'but Sir Lancelot saw not whom he smote, and therefore were they slain.'

'The death of those two,' said Arthur, 'will cause the greatest mortal war that ever was. I am sure that when Sir Gawaine knows Sir Gareth is slain he will never suffer me to rest till I have destroyed Sir Lancelot and

all his kin, or till they have destroyed me. My heart was never so heavy as it is now, and far more grievous to me is the loss of my good Knights than of my Queen; for Queens I might have in plenty, but no man had ever such a company of Knights, and it hurts me sore that Sir Lancelot and I should be at war. It is the ill will borne by Sir Agrawaine and Sir Mordred to Sir Lancelot that has caused all this sorrow.' Then one came to Sir Gawaine and told him that Sir Lancelot had borne off the Queen, and that twenty-four Knights had been slain in the combat. 'I knew well he would deliver her,' said Sir Gawaine, 'and in that, he has but acted as a Knight should and as I would have done myself. But where are my brethren? I marvel they have not been to seek me.'

'Truly,' said the man, 'Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth are slain.'

'Heaven forbid any such thing,' returned Sir Gawaine. 'I would not for all the world that that had happened, especially to my brother, Sir Gareth.'

'He is slain,' said the man, 'and it is grievous news.'

'Who slew him?' asked Sir Gawaine.

'Sir Lancelot slew them both,' answered the man.

'He cannot have slain Sir Gareth,' replied Sir Gawaine, 'for my brother Gareth loved him better than me and all his brethren, and King Arthur too. And had Sir Lancelot desired my brother to go with him, he would have turned his back on us all. Therefore I can never believe that Sir Lancelot slew my brother.'

'Sir, it is in everyone's mouth,' said the man. At this Sir Gawaine fell back in a swoon and lay long as if he were dead. Then he ran to the King, crying, 'O King Arthur, mine uncle, my good brother Sir Gareth is slain, and Sir Gaheris also,' and the King wept with him. At length Sir Gawaine said, 'Sir, I will go and see my brother Sir Gareth.'

'You cannot do that,' returned the King, 'for I have

caused him to be buried with Sir Gaheris, as I knew well that the sight would cause you overmuch sorrow.'

'How came he, Sir Lancelot, to slay Sir Gareth?' asked Sir Gawaine; 'mine own good lord, I pray you tell me, for neither Sir Gareth nor Sir Gaheris bore arms against him.'

'It is said,' answered the King, 'that Sir Lancelot slew them in the thickest of the press and knew them not. Therefore let us think upon a plan to avenge their deaths.'

'My King, my lord and mine uncle,' said Sir Gawaine, 'I swear to you by my knighthood that from this day I will never rest until Sir Lancelot or I be slain. And I will go to the world's end till I find him.'

'You need not seek him so far,' answered the King, 'for I am told that Sir Lancelot will await me and you in the Castle of Joyous Gard, and many people are flocking to him. But call your friends together, and I will call mine,' and the King ordered letters to be sent throughout all England summoning his Knights and vassals to the siege of Joyous Gard. The Castle of Joyous Gard was strong, and after fifteen weeks had passed no breach had been made in its walls. And one day, at the time of harvest, Sir Lancelot came forth on a truce, and the King and Sir Gawaine challenged him to do battle.

'Nay,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'with yourself I will never strive, and I grieve sorely that I have slain your Knights. But I was forced to it, for the saving of my life and that of my lady the Queen. And except yourself, my lord, and Sir Gawaine, there is no man that shall call me traitor but he shall pay for it with his body. As to Queen Guenevere, oft times, my lord, you have consented in the heat of your passion that she should be burnt and destroyed, and it fell to me to do battle for her, and her enemies confessed their untruth, and acknowledged her innocent. And at such times, my lord Arthur, you loved me and thanked me when I saved your

Queen from the fire, and promised ever to be my good lord, for I have fought for her many times in other quarrels than my own. Therefore, my gracious lord, take your Queen back into your grace again.'

To these words of Sir Lancelot's King Arthur answered nothing, but in his heart he would fain have made peace with Sir Lancelot, but Sir Gawaine would not let him. He reproached Sir Lancelot bitterly for the deaths of his brothers and kinsmen, and called Sir Lancelot a craven and other ill names that he would not fight with King Arthur. So at the last Sir Lancelot's patience and courtesy failed him, and he told them that the next morning he would give them battle.

The heart of Sir Gawaine leaped with joy when he heard these words of Sir Lancelot, and he summoned all his friends and his kinsfolk, and bade them watch well Sir Lancelot, and to slay him if a chance offered. But he knew not that Sir Lancelot had bidden the Knights of his following in no wise to touch King Arthur or Sir Gawaine. And when the dawn broke a great host marched out of the Castle of Joyous Gard, with Sir Lancelot at the head, and Sir Bors and Sir Lionel commanding on either side. All that day they fought, and sometimes one army seemed to be gaining, and sometimes the other. Many times King Arthur drew near Sir Lancelot, and would have slain him, and Sir Lancelot suffered him, and would not strike again. But the King was unhorsed by Sir Bors, and would have been slain but for Sir Lancelot, who stayed his hand. 'My lord Arthur,' he said, 'for God's love stop this strife. I cannot strike you, so you will gain no fame by it, though your friends never cease from trying to slay me. My lord, remember what I have done in many places and how evil is now my reward.' Then when King Arthur was on his horse again he looked on Sir Lancelot, and tears burst from his eyes, thinking of the great courtesy that was in Sir Lancelot more than in any other man. He sighed to

himself, saying softly, 'Alas! that ever this war began,' and rode away, while the battle ended for that time and the dead were buried.

But Sir Gawaine would not suffer the King to make peace, and they fought on, now in one place, and now in another, till the Pope heard of the strife and sent a noble clerk, the Bishop of Rochester, to charge the King to make peace with Sir Lancelot, and to take back unto him his Queen, the Lady Guenevere. Now the King, as has been said, would fain have followed the Pope's counsel and have accorded with Sir Lancelot, but Sir Gawaine would not suffer him. However, as to the Queen Sir Gawaine said nothing; and King Arthur gave audience to the Bishop, and swore on his great seal that he would take back the Queen as the Pope desired, and that if Sir Lancelot brought her he should come safe and go safe. So the Bishop rode to Joyous Gard and showed Sir Lancelot what the Pope had written and King Arthur had answered, and told him of the perils which would befall him if he withheld the Queen. 'It was never in my thought,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'to withhold the Queen from King Arthur, but as she would have been dead for my sake it was my part to save her life, and to keep her from danger till better times came. And I thank God that the Pope has made peace, and I shall be a thousand times gladder to bring her back than I was to take her away. Therefore ride to the King, and say that in eight days I myself will bring the Lady Guenevere unto him.' So the Bishop departed, and came to the King at Carlisle and told him what Sir Lancelot had answered, and tears burst from the King's eyes once more.

A goodly host of a hundred Knights rode eight days later from the Castle of Joyous Gard; every Knight was clothed in green velvet, and held in his hand a branch of olive, and bestrode a horse with trappings down to his heels. And behind the Queen were four and twenty gentlewomen clad in green likewise, while twelve esquires

attended on Sir Lancelot. He and the Queen wore dresses of white and gold tissue, and their horses were clothed in housings of the same, set with precious stones and pearls; and no man had ever gazed on such a noble pair, as they rode from Joyous Gard to Carlisle. When they reached the castle, Sir Lancelot sprang from his horse and helped the Queen from hers, and led her to where King Arthur sat, with Sir Gawaine and many Lords around him. He kneeled down, and the Queen kneeled with him, and many Knights wept as though it had been their own kin. But Arthur sat still and said nothing. At that Sir Lancelot rose, and the Queen likewise, and, looking straight at the King, he spoke:

'Most noble King, I have brought to you my lady the Queen, as right requires; and time hath been, my lord Arthur, that you have been greatly pleased with me when I did battle for my lady your Queen. And full well you know that she has been put to great wrong ere this, and it seems to me I had more cause to deliver her from this fire, seeing she would have been burnt for my sake.'

'Well, well, Sir Lancelot,' said the King, 'I have given you no cause to do to me as you have done, for I have held you dearer than any of my Knights.' But Sir Gawaine would not suffer the King to listen to anything Sir Lancelot said, and told him roughly that while one of them lived peace could never be made, and desired on behalf of the King that in fifteen days he should be gone out of the country. And still King Arthur said nothing, but suffered Sir Gawaine to talk as he would; and Sir Lancelot took farewell of him and of the Queen, and rode, grieving sorely, out of the Court, and sailed to his lands beyond the sea.

Though the Queen was returned again, and Sir Lancelot was beyond the sea, the hate of Sir Gawaine towards him was in no way set at rest, but he raised a great host and persuaded the King to follow him. And after many

sieges and long fighting Sir Gawaine did battle with Sir Lancelot once more, and was worsted, and Sir Lancelot might have slain him, but would not. While he lay wounded tidings came to King Arthur from England that caused the King to give up his war with Sir Lancelot and return in all haste to his own country.

THE END OF IT ALL

Now when King Arthur left England to fight with Sir Lancelot he ordered his nephew Sir Mordred to govern the land, which that false Knight did gladly. And as soon as he thought he might safely do so he caused some letters to be written saying that King Arthur had been slain in battle, and he had himself crowned King at Canterbury, where he made a great feast which lasted fifteen days. After it was over, he went to Winchester and summoned Queen Guenevere, and told her that on a certain day he would wed her and that she should make herself ready. Queen Guenevere's soul grew cold and heavy as she heard these words of Sir Mordred's, for she hated him with all her might, as he hated her; but she dared show nothing, and answered softly that she would do his bidding, only she desired that first she might go to London to buy all manner of things for her wedding. Sir Mordred trusted her because of her fair speech, and let her go. Then the Queen rode to London with all speed, and went straight to the Tower, which she filled in haste with food, and called her men-at-arms round her. When Sir Mordred knew how she had beguiled him he was wroth out of measure, and besieged the Tower, and assaulted it many times with battering rams and great engines, but could prevail nothing, for the Queen would never, for fair speech nor for foul, give herself into his hands again.

The Bishop of Canterbury hastened unto Sir Mordred, and rebuked him for wishing to marry his uncle's wife.

'Leave such desires,' said the Bishop, 'or else I shall curse you with bell, book, and candle. Also, you noise abroad that my lord Arthur is slain, and that is not so, and therefore you will make ill work in the land.' At this Sir Mordred waxed very wroth, and would have killed the Bishop had he not fled to Glastonbury, where he became a hermit, and lived in poverty and prayed all day long for the realm, for he knew that a fierce war was at hand. Soon word came to Sir Mordred that King Arthur was hurrying home across the seas, to be avenged on his nephew, who had proved traitor. Wherefore Sir Mordred sent letters to all the people throughout the kingdom, and many followed after him, for he had cunningly sown among them that with him was great joy and softness of life, while King Arthur would bring war and strife with him. So Sir Mordred drew with a great host to Dover, and waited for the King. Before King Arthur and his men could land from the boats and ships that had brought them over the sea Sir Mordred set upon them, and there was heavy slaughter. But in the end he and his men were driven back, and he fled, and his people with him. After the fight was over the King ordered the dead to be buried; and there came a man and told him that he had found Sir Gawaine lying in a boat, and that he was sore wounded. And the King went to him, and made moan over him: 'You were ever the man in the world that I loved most,' said he; 'you and Sir Lancelot.' 'Mine uncle King Arthur,' answered Sir Gawaine, 'my death day has come, and all through my own fault. Had Sir Lancelot been with you as he used to be this unhappy war had never begun, and of that I am the cause, for I would not accord with him. And therefore, I pray you, give me paper, pen, and ink that I may write to him.' So paper and ink were brought, and Sir Gawaine was held up by King Arthur, and a letter was writ wherein Sir Gawaine confessed that he was dying of an old wound given him

by Sir Lancelot in the siege of one of the cities across the sea, and thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Merlin. 'Of a more noble man might I not be slain,' said he. 'Also, Sir Lancelot, make no tarrying, but come in haste to King Arthur, for sore bested is he with my brother Sir Mordred, who has taken the crown, and would have wedded my lady Queen Guenevere had she not sought safety in the Tower of London. Pray for my soul, I beseech you, and visit my tomb.' And after writing this letter, at the hour of noon, Sir Gawaine gave up his spirit, and was buried by the King in the chapel within Dover Castle. Then was it told King Arthur that Sir Mordred had pitched a new field upon Barham Down, and the next morning the King rode hither to him, and there was a fierce battle between them, and many on both sides were slain. But at the last King Arthur's party stood best, and Sir Mordred and his men fled to Canterbury.

After the Knights which were dead had been buried, and those that were wounded tended with healing salves, King Arthur drew westwards towards Salisbury, and many of Sir Mordred's men followed after him, but they that loved Sir Lancelot went unto Sir Mordred. And a day was fixed between the King and Sir Mordred that they should meet upon a down near Salisbury, and give battle once more. But the night before the battle Sir Gawaine appeared unto the King in a vision, and warned him not to fight next day, which was Trinity Sunday, as he would be slain and many of his Knights also; but to make a truce for a month, and at the end of that time Sir Lancelot would arrive, and would slay Sir Mordred, and all his Knights with him. As soon as he awoke the King called the Bishops and the wisest men of his army, and told them of his vision, and took counsel what should be done. And it was agreed that the King should send an embassage of two Knights and two Bishops unto Sir Mordred, and offer him as much goods and lands as

they thought best if he would engage to make a treaty for a month with King Arthur.

So they departed, and came to Sir Mordred, where he had a grim host of an hundred thousand men. For a long time he would not suffer himself to be entreated, but at the last he agreed to have Cornwall and Kent in King Arthur's days, and after all England. Furthermore, it was decided that King Arthur and Sir Mordred should meet in the plain between their hosts, each with fourteen persons. 'I am glad of this,' said King Arthur, when he heard what had been done; but he warned his men that if they were to see a sword drawn they were to come on swiftly and slay that traitor, Sir Mordred, 'for I in no wise trust him.' And in like wise spake Sir Mordred unto his host. Then they two met, and agreed on the truce, and wine was fetched and they drank, and all was well. But while they were drinking an adder crept out of a bush, and stung one of the fourteen Knights on his foot, and he drew his sword to slay the adder, not thinking of anything but his pain. And when the men of both armies beheld that drawn sword, they blew trumpets and horns and shouted grimly, and made them ready for battle. So King Arthur leaped on his horse, and Sir Mordred on his, and they went back to their own armies, and thus began the fight, and never was there seen one more doleful in any Christian land. For all day long there was rushing and riding, spearing and striking, and many a grim word was there spoken, and many a deadly stroke given. And at the end full an hundred thousand dead men lay upon the down, and King Arthur had but two Knights left living, Sir Lucan and his brother, Sir Bedivere. 'Alas! that I should have lived to see this day,' cried the King, 'for now I am come to mine end; but would to God that I knew where were that traitor Sir Mordred that hath caused all this mischief.' Then suddenly he saw Sir Mordred leaning on his sword among a great heap of dead men.

'Give me my spear,' said King Arthur unto Sir Lucan.

'Sir, let him be,' answered Sir Lucan. 'Remember your dream, and leave off by this. For, blessed be God, you have won the field, and we three be alive, and of the others none is alive save Sir Mordred himself. If you leave off now, the day of destiny is past.'

'Tide me death, tide me life,' said the King, 'he shall not escape my hands, for a better chance I shall never have,' and he took his spear in both hands and ran towards Sir Mordred, crying 'Traitor! now is your death day come,' and smote him under the shield, so that the spear went through his body. And when Sir Mordred felt he had his death wound, he raised himself up and struck King Arthur such a blow that the sword clave his helmet, and then fell stark dead on the earth again. When Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere saw that sight they carried the King to a little chapel, but they hoped not to leave him there long, for Sir Lucan had noted that many people were stealing out to rob the slain of the ornaments on their armour. And those that were not dead already they slew.

'Would that I could quit this place to go to some large town,' said the King, when he had heard this, 'but I cannot stand, my head works so. Ah, Lancelot, sorely have I missed thee.' At that Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere tried to lift him, but Sir Lucan had been grievously wounded in the fight, and the blood burst forth again as he lifted Arthur, and he died and fell at the feet of the King.

'Alas!' said the King, 'he has died for my sake, and he had more need of help than I. But he would not complain, his heart was so set to help me. And I should sorrow yet more if I were still to live long, but my time flieth fast. Therefore, Sir Bedivere, cease moaning and weeping, and take Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there, I charge thee, throw my sword in that water, and come again and tell me what thou hast seen.'

Sir Mordred

'My lord,' answered Sir Bedivere, 'your commandment shall be done,' and he departed. But when he looked at that noble sword, and beheld the jewels and gold that covered the pommel and hilt, he said to himself, 'If I throw this rich sword into the water no good will come of it, but only harm and loss'; so he hid Excalibur under a tree, and returned unto the King and told him his bidding was done. 'What did you see there?' asked the King.

'Sir,' answered Sir Bedivere, 'I saw nothing but the winds and waves.'

'You have not dealt truly with me,' said the King. 'Go back, and do my command; spare not, but throw it in.' But again Sir Bedivere's heart failed him, and he hid the sword, and returned to tell the King he had seen nothing but the wan water.

'Ah, traitor!' cried King Arthur, 'this is twice you have betrayed me. If you do not now fulfil my bidding, with mine own hands will I slay you, for you would gladly see me dead for the sake of my sword.' Then Sir Bedivere was shamed at having disobeyed the King, and drew forth the sword from its hiding place, and carried it to the water side, and with a mighty swing threw it far into the water. And as it flew through the air, an arm and hand lifted itself out of the water, and caught the hilt, and brandished the sword thrice, and vanished with it beneath the water. So Sir Bedivere came again unto the King, and told him what he saw.

'Alas!' said the King, 'help me hence, for I have tarried overlong,' and Sir Bedivere took him on his back, and bare him to the water side. And when they stood by the bank, a little barge containing many fair ladies and a Queen, all in black hoods, drew near, and they wept and shrieked when they beheld King Arthur.

'Now put me into the barge,' said the King, and Sir Bedivere laid him softly down, and the ladies made great mourning and the barge rowed from the land.

'Ah, my lord Arthur!' cried Sir Bedivere, 'what shall become of me now you go from me, and I am left here alone with my enemies?'

'Comfort yourself,' replied the King, 'and do as well as you may, for I go unto the valley of Avilion, to be healed of my grievous wound. And if you never more hear of me, pray for my soul.' But Sir Bedivere watched the barge till it was beyond his sight, then he rode all night till he came to a hermitage. Now when Queen Guenevere heard of the battle, and how that King Arthur was slain and Sir Mordred and all their Knights, she stole away, and five ladies with her, and rode to Amesbury; and there she put on clothes of black and white, and became a nun, and did great penance, and many alms deeds, and people marvelled at her and at her godly life. And ever she wept and moaned over the years that were past, and for King Arthur.

As soon as the messenger whom the King had sent with Sir Gawaine's letter reached Sir Lancelot, and he learned that Sir Mordred had taken for himself the crown of England, he rose up in wrath, and, calling Sir Bors, bid him collect their host, that they should pass at once over the sea to avenge themselves on that false Knight. A fair wind blew them to Dover, and there Sir Lancelot asked tidings of King Arthur. Then the people told him that the King was slain, and Sir Mordred, and an hundred thousand men besides, and that the King had buried Sir Gawaine in the chapel at Dover Castle. 'Fair Sirs,' said Sir Lancelot, 'show me that tomb'; and they showed it to him, and Sir Lancelot kneeled before it, and wept and prayed, and this he did for two days. And on the third morning he summoned before him all the great Lords and leaders of his host, and said to them, 'Fair Lords, I thank you all for coming here with me, but we come too late, and that will be bitter grief to me as long as I shall live. But since it is so, I will myself ride and seek my lady Guenevere in the west country, where they say she has

EXCALIBVR RETVRNS TO THE MERE

gone, and tarry you here, I entreat you, for fifteen days, and if I should not return take your ships and depart into your own country.'

Sir Bors strove to reason with him that the quest was fruitless, and that in the west country he would find few friends; but his words availed nothing. For seven days Sir Lancelot rode, and at last he came to a nunnery, where Queen Guenevere was looking out from her lattice, and was ware of his presence as he walked in the cloister. And when she saw him she swooned, and her ladies and gentlewomen tended her. When she was recovered, she spoke to them and said, 'You will marvel, fair ladies, why I should swoon. It was caused by the sight of yonder Knight who stands there, and I pray you bring him to me.' As soon as Sir Lancelot was brought she said to her ladies, 'Through me and this man has this war been wrought, for which I repent me night and day. Therefore, Sir Lancelot, I require and pray you never to see my face again, but go back to your own land, and govern it and protect it; and take to yourself a wife, and pray that my soul may be made clean of its ill doing.'

'Nay, Madam,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'that shall I never do; but the same life that you have taken upon you, will I take upon me likewise.'

'If you will do so,' said the Queen, 'it is well; but I may never believe but that you will turn to the world again.'

'Well, Madam,' answered he, 'you speak as it pleases you, but you never knew me false to my promise, and I will forsake the world as you have done. For if in the quest of the Sangreal I had forsaken its vanities with all my heart and will, I had passed all Knights in the quest, except Sir Galahad my son. And therefore, lady, since you have taken you to perfection, I must do so also, and if I may find a hermit that will receive me I will

pray and do penance while my life lasts. Wherefore, Madam, I beseech you to kiss me once again.'

'No,' said the Queen, 'that I may not do,' and Sir Lancelot took his horse and departed in great sorrow. All that day and the next night he rode through the forest till he beheld a hermitage and a chapel between two cliffs, and heard a little bell ring to Mass. And he that sang Mass was the Bishop of Canterbury, and Sir Bedivere was with him. After Mass Sir Bedivere told Sir Lancelot how King Arthur had thrown away his sword and had sailed to the valley of Avilion, and Sir Lancelot's heart almost burst for grief. Then he kneeled down and besought the Bishop that he might be his brother. 'That I will, gladly,' said the Bishop, and put a robe upon him.

After the fifteen days were ended, and still Sir Lancelot did not return, Sir Bors made the great host go back across the sea, while he and some of Sir Lancelot's kin set forth to seek all over England till they found Sir Lancelot. They rode different ways, and by fortune Sir Bors came one day to the chapel where Sir Lancelot was. And he prayed that he might stay and be one of their fellowship, and in six months six other Knights were joined to them, and their horses went where they would, for the Knights spent their lives in fasting and prayer, and kept no riches for themselves.

In this wise six years passed, and one night a vision came to Sir Lancelot in his sleep charging him to hasten unto Amesbury. 'By the time that thou come there,' said the vision, 'thou shalt find Queen Guenevere dead; therefore take thy fellows with thee and fetch her corpse, and bury it by the side of her husband, the noble King Arthur.'

Then Sir Lancelot rose up and told the hermit, and the hermit ordered him to make ready and to do all as the vision had commanded. And Sir Lancelot and seven of the other Knights went on foot from Glastonbury to

Amesbury, and it took them two days to compass the distance, for it was far and they were weak with fasting. When they reached the nunnery Queen Guenevere had been dead but half an hour, and she had first summoned her ladies to her, and told them that Sir Lancelot had been a priest for near a twelvemonth. 'And hither he cometh as fast as he may,' she said, 'to fetch my corpse, and beside my lord King Arthur he shall bury me. And I beseech Almighty God that I may never have power to see Sir Lancelot with my bodily eyes.' 'Thus,' said the ladies, 'she prayed for two days till she was dead.' Then Sir Lancelot looked upon her face and sighed, but wept little, and next day he sang Mass. After that the Queen was laid on a bier drawn by horses, and an hundred torches were carried round her, and Sir Lancelot and his fellows walked behind her singing holy chants, and at times one would come forward and throw incense on the dead. So they came to Glastonbury, and the Bishop of Canterbury sang a Requiem Mass over the Queen, and she was wrapped in cloth, and placed first in a web of lead, and then in a coffin of marble, and when she was put into the earth Sir Lancelot swooned away.

'You are to blame,' said the hermit, when he awaked from his swoon, 'you ought not make such manner of sorrow.'

'Truly,' answered Sir Lancelot, 'I trust I do not displease God, but when I remember her beauty, and her nobleness, and that of the King, and when I saw his corpse and her corpse lie together, my heart would not bear up my body. And I remembered, too, that it was through me and my pride that they both came to their end.'

From that day Sir Lancelot ate so little food that he dwined away, and for the most part was found kneeling by the tomb of King Arthur and Queen Guenevere. None could comfort him, and after six weeks he was too weak to rise from his bed. Then he sent for the hermit

and to his fellows, and asked in a weary voice that they would give him the last rites of the Church; and begged that when he was dead his body might be taken to Joyous Gard, which some say is Alnwick and others Bamborough. That night the hermit had a vision that he saw Sir Lancelot being carried up to heaven by the angels, and he waked Sir Bors and bade him go and see if anything ailed Sir Lancelot. So Sir Bors went and Sir Lancelot lay on his bed, stark dead, and he smiled as he lay there. Then was there great weeping and wringing of hands, more than had been made for any man; but they placed him on the horse bier that had carried Queen Guenevere, and lit a hundred torches, and in fifteen days they reached Joyous Gard. There his body was laid in the choir, with his face uncovered, and many prayers were said over him. And there, in the midst of their praying, came Sir Ector de Maris, who for seven years had sought Sir Lancelot through all the land.

'Ah, Lancelot,' he said, when he stood looking beside his dead body, 'thou wert head of all Christian Knights. Thou wert the courtliest Knight that ever drew sword, and the faithfulest friend that ever bestrode a horse. Thou wert the goodliest Knight that ever man has seen, and the truest lover that ever loved a woman.'

THE BATTLE OF RONCEVALLES

THE BATTLE OF RONCEVALLES

About twelve hundred years ago there lived an Emperor of the West whose name was Charles the Great, or, as some called him, Charlemagne, which means Carolus Magnus. When he was not making war he ruled well and wisely at Aix-la-Chapelle, but at the time that this story begins he had been for seven years in Spain, fighting against the Saracens. The whole country had fallen before him, except only Saragossa, a famous town on the river Ebro, not far from the outskirts of the Pyrenees, which was held by the Moorish King Marsile, with a great host.

One hot day Marsile was lying on a cool slab of blue marble which was shaded by overhanging fruit trees, and his nobles were sitting all round him. Suddenly the King sat up, and, turning to his followers, he said:

'Listen to me, my Lords, for I have something of note to say unto you. Evil days are upon us, for the Emperor of fair France will never rest until he has driven us out of our country, and I have no army wherewith to meet him. Then counsel me, my wise men, how to escape both death and shame.'

At the King's speech there was silence, for none knew how to reply, till Blancandrin, Lord of Val-Fonde, stood up.

'Fear nothing,' he said to the King, 'but send a messenger to this proud Charles, promising to do him faithful service and asking for his friendship. And let there go with the messenger presents to soften his heart,

bears and lions, and dogs to hunt them; seven hundred camels and four hundred mules, loaded with gold and silver, so that he shall have money to pay his soldiers. The messenger shall tell him that on the Feast of St. Michael you yourself will appear before him, and suffer yourself to be converted to the faith of Christ, and that you will be his man and do homage to him. If he asks for hostages, well! send ten or twenty, so as to gain his confidence; the sons of our wives. I myself will offer up my own son, even if it leads to his death. Better they should all die, than that we should lose our country and our lands, and be forced to beg till the end of our lives.' And the nobles answered, 'He has spoken well.'

King Marsile broke up his Council, and chose out those who were to go on the embassy. 'My Lords,' he said, 'you will start at once on your mission to King Charles, and be sure you take olive branches in your hands, and beg him to have pity on me. Tell him that before a month has passed over his head I will follow you with a thousand of my servants, to receive baptism and do him homage. If, besides, he asks for hostages, they shall be sent.' 'It is well,' said Blancandrin, 'the treaty is good.'

The Emperor Charles was happier than he had ever been in his life. He had taken Cordova, and thrown down the walls; his war machines had laid low the towers, and the rich city had been plundered, while every Saracen who refused to be baptized had been slain. Now he felt he might rest, and sought the cool of an orchard, where were already gathered his nephew Roland, with Oliver his comrade, Geoffrey of Anjou his standard bearer, and many other famous Knights. They lay about on white carpets doing what they best liked — some played games, chess or draughts, but these were mostly the old men who were glad to be still: the young ones fenced and tilted. Under a pine tree, close to a sweet-briar, a seat of massive gold was placed, and on it sat the Emperor of the fair country of France, a strong man,

Charlemagne

with his beard white as snow. But his rest was short. Soon came the messengers of the Saracen King, and, descending from their mules, they bowed low before him.

It was Blancandrin who first spoke, showing with his hands the presents he had brought with him, and offering that the King would receive baptism, and do homage for his lands, if only the Emperor Charles would return with his army into France, 'for,' said Blancandrin, 'you have been too long in this country.'

When Blancandrin had spoken, the Emperor sat silent with his head bent, thinking of the words of the Saracen, for never was it his custom to be hasty in his speech. At length he looked up, and a proud look was on his face.

'You have said well,' he answered, 'yet King Marsile is my deadly enemy, and how do I know that I can put my trust in your offers?'

'You will have hostages,' replied the Saracen, 'sons of the highest nobles, and my own son will be among them. And when you have gone back to your own palace, my master will follow you on the Feast of St. Michael, and will be made a Christian in the waters of Aix.'

'If he does this,' said Charles, 'his soul may still be saved,' and he bade hospitality to be shown to his guests.

Before sunrise next morning the Emperor left his bed, and heard Mass said and Matins sung. Then he seated himself under a pine, and called his Barons to council. Many there were whose names men still remember: Ogier the Dane, and Archbishop Turpin of Rheims, and the brave Count of Gascony, Count Roland, nephew of Charles, and his friend the valiant Oliver. Ganélon was there too, by whom the wrong was to be wrought. As soon as they were all seated, the Emperor spoke and told them afresh what the messengers had said. 'But Marsile makes one condition,' continued Charles, 'which is that I must return to France, where he will come to me as my vassal. Now, does he swear falsely, or can I trust his oath?'

'Let us be very careful how we answer him,' cried the nobles with one voice.

At that Roland sprang to his feet. 'It is madness to put faith in Marsile,' said he; 'seven years have we been in Spain, and many towns have I conquered for you, but Marsile we have always proved a traitor. Once before he sent us an embassy of Unbelievers each one bearing an olive branch, and they made you the same promises. Once before you called a meeting of your Barons who counselled you to do the thing they knew you wished, and you sent to the Court of the Unbelievers the noble Counts Basil and Bazan. And how did Marsile treat them? He commanded that they should be led into the mountains and that their heads should be cut off, which was done. No! Go on with the war, as you have begun it; march on Saragossa and lay siege to the town, though it should last to the end of your life, and avenge those whom Marsile put to death.'

With bent head the Emperor listened to Roland, twisting all the while his fingers in his moustache. He kept silent, turning over in his mind the things Roland had said, and the nobles kept silence, too, all except Ganélon. For Ganélon rose and stood before Charles and began to speak. 'Believe none of us,' he said; 'think of nothing but your own advantage when Marsile offers to become your vassal, and to do homage for the whole of Spain, and to receive baptism besides; he who wishes you to reject such offers cares nothing for the deaths the rest of us may die. Pay no attention to such madness, but listen to your wise men.'

He sat down in his place, and then the Duke Naimes took up his words. 'You have heard,' he said to Charles, 'the words of Ganélon. Wise council, if we only follow it! Marsile knows that he is conquered at last. You have won his towns, and vanquished him in battle, and he is reduced to beg for your pity. It would be shameful to ask for anything further, and the more so as you

have hostages as pledges of his good faith. It is time that the war ended; therefore send him one of your Barons to speak with him face to face.' And the nobles answered, 'The Duke has spoken well.'

'Noble Lords, what envoy shall we send to King Marsile at Saragossa?' 'I will go, if it is your pleasure,' said Duke Naimes. 'Give me your glove and the wand of office.' 'No,' replied Charles, 'your wisdom is great, and I cannot spare you from my side. Remain where you are, I command you.'

'Let me go,' cried Roland. 'No, no,' answered Count Oliver; 'you are too hasty and too imprudent. You would only fall into some trap. With the King's good leave I will go instead.'

'Hold your peace,' said Charles, shaking his head; 'you will neither of you go. None of my twelve peers shall be chosen.'

Then Turpin of Rheims left his seat and spoke to Charles with his loud and ringing voice. 'Fair King, give your Franks a little peace. For seven years you have been in Spain, and your Barons have all that time been fighting and suffering. It is now, sire, that the glove and the wand of office should be given. I will go and visit this Unbeliever, and will tell him in what scorn I hold him.' But the Emperor, full of rage, cried out, 'By my beard, you will stop with me. Go to your place on the white carpet, and give me none of your advice unless I ask for it.'

'Good Frankish Knights,' said Charles, 'choose me a Baron from my own land, who shall be envoy to King Marsile, and who, at need, can fight well.'

'Ah,' cried Roland, 'let it be Ganélon, my stepfather; you will not find a better man.' 'Yes,' said the Franks, 'he is the man; let him go if the King pleases.'

'Ganélon,' commanded the King, 'come here and I will give you the glove and the wand of office. It is the voice of the Barons that has chosen you.'

'No,' replied Ganélon, 'it is Roland's doing, and to the end of my life I will bear him hatred for it. Oliver also will I hate, since Oliver is his friend. And never more will I love the twelve peers, for they love him. Under your own eyes, sire, I throw down my challenge.'

'You are angry about nothing,' said the King, 'and as I have commanded you, you will go.'

'I can go, but it will be my death, as it was the death of Basil and of his brother Bazan. Who goes there, returns not. But, sire, do not forget that your sister is my wife and that I have a son Baldwin, who, if he lives, will be the bravest of the brave. To him I leave all my lands. Guard him well, for I shall see him no more.'

'Your heart is too tender,' said Charles, 'but there is no help for it, you must go.'

At the words of the King, Ganélon flung his fur mantle to the ground in fury. 'It is to you,' he cried, turning to Roland, 'that I owe this peril. I am your stepfather, and that is reason enough that you send me to lose my head at the Court of King Marsile. Let it be so; but if ever I return I will bring on you such trouble that it will only end with your life.'

'You talk like a madman,' said Roland. 'All men know that I care nothing for threats. But it needs a wise man to go on such a mission, and if the King pleases, I will go in your place.'

'You will not go in my place,' answered Ganélon. 'I am not your vassal, to do as you bid me. Charles has commanded me to go to Saragossa, therefore to Saragossa I go. But beware of what I do when I get there.'

At this Roland began to laugh, and when Ganélon saw him laughing, it seemed as if his heart would burst with anger. 'I hate you,' he muttered to Roland. 'I should never have been chosen but for you. Great Emperor,' he said aloud to Charles, 'behold me ready to obey your orders.'

'Listen, fair Count,' replied Charles, 'for this is the

MARSILE THREATENS GANELON WITH A JAVELIN

message I would have you bear to King Marsile. If he agrees to become my vassal, and to receive Holy Baptism, I will give him half of Spain as a fief. The other half will be held by Roland, my nephew. If these terms do not please King Marsile, I will myself besiege Saragossa, and will take him and bind him in chains. Then he shall be brought to Aix, where he shall be put to a shameful death. So take this letter which is sealed with my seal, and give it into the hand of the Infidel.' When Ganélon had put the letter in safety, the King held out to him his glove, but the Count was not quick to seize it, and it fell to the ground. 'Heavens,' cried the Franks who were standing round, 'how dreadful an omen! This message will be the cause of dire misfortunes.' 'I will send you news of them,' Ganélon answered. And he said to Charles, 'Let me depart, sire, as I must go. I wish to lose no time.'

'Go then,' replied the King, making over him the sign of the cross and giving him the wand of office. And Ganélon went.

It was not long before he overtook the Saracens, who had lingered, hoping he might join them, and Blancandrin began to sing the praises of Charles and his conquests. 'He is a wonderful man,' answered Ganélon, 'and of such a strong will that no man may strive against it.'

'How brave are these Franks,' went on Blancandrin; 'but your nobles were ill-advised in the counsel they gave the King upon this matter. It bodes evil to Charles and to many beside him.'

'None of them merit this blame,' said Ganélon, 'save Roland only, and the shame will be on his head. His pride is so great that he thinks no sword can touch him, but until he is really dead peace we can never have.' Here the Saracen glanced at Ganélon beside him. 'He is a fine man,' thought he, 'but there is cunning in his eye,' and then Blancandrin spoke. 'Let us understand each other plainly,' he said; 'is it your wish to be

avenged of Roland? Then, by the beard of Mahomet, deliver him into our hands. King Marsile is a generous master, and knows how to repay those who serve him.' Ganélon heard his words, and bent his head in silence.

But the silence did not last long: before they had arrived at Saragossa, Ganélon had made an agreement with Blancandrin, that they would find some means of causing Roland to perish. This decided, they rode through the gates of the town, and dismounted from their horses. In the shadow of a pine, a throne was placed covered with soft silk from Alexandria, and on it sat he who was once the master of the whole of Spain. Twenty thousand Saracens stood around him, but not a sound was made, so eager they were to hear Charles's answer. Blancandrin advanced to the King's throne, leading Ganélon by the wrist. 'Greeting, great King,' said he; 'we delivered your message to Charles, and he raised his two hands to heaven, and answered nothing. But he has sent you one of his great Lords, and he will tell you if it is peace or no peace.'

'Let him speak,' replied Marsile, 'and we will listen.'

Ganélon waited a little before he spoke, for he knew that one careless word might prove his own ruin. 'Greeting,' he said, when at last he had made ready his speech. 'This is the message sent you by Charlemagne. You must receive Holy Baptism, and Charles will allow you to do homage for half of Spain. The other half he gives to Roland, his nephew, and a proud neighbour you will find him. If these terms do not please you, he will lay siege to Saragossa, and will seize your person, and carry you to Aix, the capital of the Empire, where you will die a shameful death.' When he heard this, Marsile trembled with rage, and drawing a dart he would have thrown it at Ganélon had not someone held him from behind. Ganélon looked on, his hand on his sword, which he drew a little from its scabbard. 'Sword,' said he, 'you are sharp and bright. While I wear you at the Court of

this King, the Emperor can never say that I have died alone in a foreign land. But before I die you shall drink the blood of the best in his army.'

The Infidels who were standing by prayed Marsile to go back to his seat in order that the matter might be decided. 'You put yourself in the wrong,' said the old Caliph, 'when you wish to strike this Frank.'

'Sire,' answered Ganélon, 'I will suffer this insult patiently, but not all the treasure of your kingdom should hinder my delivering the message of my master.' With that he threw from his shoulders his mantle of zibeline, but kept light hold of his sword. 'See,' said the Saracens, 'did you ever behold a prouder warrior?' Ganélon drew near the King and repeated the message that Charles had given him. When he had finished he held out the letter, and Marsile, who had studied in the best schools of learning, broke the seal and read it to himself. 'Listen to this, my Lords,' he cried, 'and say if ever you heard such madness! Charles bids me think of Basil and Bazan, whose heads I cut off, up there in the mountains. And if I wish my own life to be spared, I am to send him my uncle, the Caliph, to deal with as he thinks fit.' The Saracens heard the message in grim silence, which was broken by the voice of the King's son. 'Ganélon must be mad indeed to give such a message as that,' said he, 'and he deserves death for his boldness. Deliver him to me, and I will do justice on him.' Ganélon understood his words but said nothing, only he quietly placed his back against a pine tree, and played with the hilt of his sword.

King Marsile rose and went into his orchard, followed by his best councillors, Jorfalon his son, his uncle the Caliph, and others whom he most trusted. 'Summon the Frank also,' Blancandrin whispered in his ear, 'for he has promised to throw in his lot with us.' 'Bring him,' answered the King, and Blancandrin brought him into the orchard, where the web of treason was woven.

'Noble Ganélon,' said Marsile, 'I acted foolishly towards you just now, when, in my anger, I sought to strike you. Let me offer you the mantle of marten fur in amends. It has just arrived from a far country, and is worth five hundred pounds in gold.' 'I accept it gladly,' replied Ganélon as the King hung the cloak round his neck, 'and may you be rewarded in as splendid a gift!'

'Ganélon,' continued the King, 'I wish you to be my friend, though it will not be wise to show you openly my good will. Tell me about Charlemagne, and whether what I have heard of him is really the truth. They say he is very old, nearly two hundred years, and that he has wandered from one country to another and been in the thick of every fight, and has made the most powerful Kings beggars. When will he grow tired of all these wars? It is time that he rested himself at Aix.'

'No,' said Ganélon, 'those who told you that Charlemagne was like that did not speak truly. My tongue could never tell of his goodness and his honour towards all men. Who could ever paint what Charlemagne is? I would rather die than leave his service.'

'What you say is wonderful,' replied Marsile, 'but after all he has done, will repose never seem sweet to him?'

'Not while his nephew Roland lives,' said Ganélon. 'There is not such a fighter under heaven, and his comrade Oliver is famous also for his prowess. The twelve peers whom the Emperor so dearly loves, with twenty thousand picked men from the van of the army — truly Charlemagne may rest in peace, and fear no man.'

'Fair Lord,' answered Marsile, 'my subjects are the finest you can see, and at any moment I can summon four hundred thousand men to give battle to Charlemagne.'

'You will not conquer him this time,' said Ganélon, 'and in a fight thousands of your soldiers would be killed. Hear my counsel. Send Charles yet more gold and

silver, and offer twenty other hostages, on condition he returns himself to France, leaving his rear-guard behind him. This, being the post of danger, will be claimed by his nephew Roland, whose comrade Oliver is always by his side. It will be easy to manage that the two Counts shall meet their deaths, and Roland and Oliver once dead the King will have no more heart for war.'

'Fair Lord,' replied Marsile, 'what shall I have to do in order to kill Roland?'

'That I can easily tell you,' answered Ganélon. 'When Charlemagne has passed safely through the mountains, with the most part of his soldiers, his baggage and his hostages, then have a hundred thousand of your Infidels ready to fall upon Roland and his rear-guard of twenty thousand men. The Franks will fight hard, but they cannot stand against such numbers, though of their foes many will be left upon the field. Then lose not a moment, but give them battle a second time. They will be too few and too weak to fight long, and for the rest of your life you will have peace. If you kill Roland, you will have cut off the Emperor's right arm. Farewell to the splendid armies of the Franks; never more will such forces be gathered together; never will Charles wear again his golden crown, but all Spain shall be in peace.'

Marsile heard the words of Ganélon, and stooped and kissed his neck, and ordered his costliest treasures to be brought before him. Then he said: 'There is no further need of speech between us; swear that I shall find him in the rear-guard, and I shall swear that you shall have your revenge.' And Ganélon swore. But Marsile was not content with the oath that Ganélon made. He commanded that a copy of the Koran should be brought, the sacred book of Mahomet, and placed it on a chair of ivory, which stood under an olive tree. With his hand on the book Marsile also took his oath, that if among the rear-guard of Charlemagne's army he found Roland, he would fall upon him with all his host and compass his

death, and that of the twelve peers of France. So the bond of treachery was sealed. Then the Infidels crowded round, and one offered Ganélon his sword, and another his helmet, while the Queen brought bracelets of precious stones as gifts for his wife. Marsile asked his treasurer if he had made ready the presents that were to be sent to Charles, and pressing Ganélon in his arms, he declared that not a day should pass without his friend likewise receiving presents, if only he would give his help in the slaying of Roland. 'You keep me too long,' was Ganélon's answer, and he mounted his horse and went.

All this while the Emperor Charles was marching towards France, but he halted at a small town which long ago had been taken by Roland, waiting till he heard some tidings of Ganélon, and received the news that Marsile had agreed to do homage for Spain. At length, one morning at dawn, a messenger came to the King's tent telling him that Ganélon had arrived, and Charles hastened forth with Roland and Oliver, Duke Naimes and a thousand more, to meet Ganélon. 'Greeting,' said the traitor, bowing low; 'I bring you the keys of Saragossa, and twenty hostages, and great gifts. The noble King Marsile beseeches you not to blame him, because the Caliph, his uncle, has not come with me. I have seen — seen with my own eyes — three hundred thousand men all covered with armour sail away in ships with the Caliph for their leader, because they could neither defend their own faith nor forswear it. But hardly were they out of sight of land than a fierce tempest overtook them, and they were all lost. The Caliph must have died with the rest, or the King would have bade him come with me. As to the King himself, sire, before a month has passed he will be in France, ready to receive baptism in your presence. And he will become your vassal, and do homage for the kingdom of Spain.'

'You have done wisely,' said Charles, 'and your reward shall be great.' So trumpets were sounded and tents

were struck, and the host marched with gaiety in their hearts to France the Fair.

'My war is finished,' said the King, as his army gladly

turned their backs on Spain, and at nightfall spread their tents and slept till day began. But little he knew that four hundred thousand Unbelievers, with shields slung

from their necks and swords in their hands, were riding silently through the mountain passes with the intent of hiding themselves in a wood till the moment came. There they were, and the Franks knew nothing of it, nor what would come.

Charles slept, and in his sleep he dreamed that Ganélon took his stout lance of ash wood from his hands and brandished it in the air, then broke it with his fists. After this dream came another. He was no longer shut fast in by the mountains, but was at home in France, standing in his chapel at Aix. Here a bear appeared before him and bit so deep into his arm that it reached the bone. Then from the other side, from the Ardennes, there sprang a leopard and would have torn him in pieces, had not a greyhound come to his aid, and attacked first the bear and then the leopard. 'A fight! a fight!' cried the Franks, but they knew not which would be victorious. And all the while Charles slept soundly. With the dawn a thousand horns awoke the sleepers, and the clamour of a camp began. 'My Lords,' said Charles, calling all his Barons together, 'you see these narrow defiles through which we must pass? To whom shall I give the command of the rear-guard which must protect the rest of my army?'

'To Roland, to Roland my stepson,' cried Ganélon. 'No Knight is so brave as he, and we may trust to him the safety of our host.' Charles listened and looked him in the face. 'You must be the devil himself,' he said, 'for you seem as if your body was shaken by some evil passion. If Roland goes to the rear, who then shall command the van?'

'Ogier, the Dane,' answered Ganélon. 'There is no better man.'

When Count Roland heard his name he pressed forward. 'Fair stepfather, I owe you much love for proposing me to lead the rear-guard of the army. Charles the King shall lose nothing through me; not a horse or a

mule shall fall till his price is paid in blows received by the Infidels.' 'You speak well,' said Ganélon, 'and what you say is true.'

Then Roland turned to Charlemagne: 'Give me, O King, the bow which you hold in your hand. I will promise not to let it fall, as Ganélon did your glove.'

But the King sat silent, with his head bent, and tears ran down his cheeks. At last Naimes drew near and spoke to him, and among them all Charles had no more faithful friend. 'You have heard, sire, what Count Roland said. If he is to lead the rear-guard — and there is no man that can do it better — give him the bow that you have drawn, for which he asks.' So the King gave it to him, and Roland took it gladly. 'Fair nephew,' said the King, 'I wish to leave half of my army behind with you; keep it close to you, it will be your safeguard.'

'No,' answered the Count; 'to accept the half of your army would be to shame my race. Leave me twenty thousand Franks, and you will pass the defiles in safety. While I live you need fear no man.' Quickly Count Roland girded on his armour, girded on his sword Durendal, the comrade of many fights, and mounted his horse Veillantif, whom all men knew. 'We will follow you to death,' cried the Franks as they saw him. But Roland answered them nothing. The first to come to his side was Oliver, his old companion, then Turpin the Archbishop, the Count Gautier, and many more, and after that they chose twenty thousand men, the best that Charles had with him. Some of them he sent, under Count Gautier, to drive the Unbelievers from the hill-top, and that same day they fought a fierce battle. And while Charles and his army entered the pass of Roncevalles, Roland took up his ground and prepared for the fight, which he knew must come shortly. And Ganélon, the traitor, knew it too.

High were the mountains, and dark the valleys; terrible were the defiles amidst the black rocks. The army

marched slowly and with great difficulty; fifteen miles away you could hear the sound of their tramping. But when they caught sight of Gascony, of France, where they had left their homes and their wives, there was not a man among them who did not weep for happiness. Charles alone shed tears of sorrow, for he thought of his nephew in the passes of Spain. 'Ganélon has betrayed us,' said he to Duke Naimes, 'and he has betrayed Roland too. It was he who caused him to stay behind with the rear-guard, and if I lose him — O God! I shall never find such another.'

The nephew of Marsile had craved a boon, that he and eleven of his comrades should measure themselves against the Twelve Peers of France, and that none but himself should strike the first blow at Roland. The noblest subjects of Marsile flocked at his call, and a gay show they made when ready for battle, and mounted on horses as eager for the fray as themselves. So great was the noise that the sound reached even to the French camp. 'I think, comrade, that it will not be long before we fight with the Saracens,' said Oliver.

'May it be as you say,' answered Roland; 'it is our duty to make a stand here for the King, as one should be ready to suffer all pains for one's liege lord. For him one must endure heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and strike hard blows with all one's might, and take heed that no evil song can be made on us after we are dead. The right is on the side of the Christians. Look to yourselves, for you will never see a bad example from me.'

THE BATTLE

Oliver had climbed a hill, from which he could see into the plains of Spain. 'Roland,' cried he, 'do you see those shining helmets and glittering swords? It is Ganélon who has done this, and it was he who had you left here.'

'Be silent, Oliver,' answered Roland. 'He is my stepfather. I will not hear him ill spoken of.' Then Oliver went down the hill and told his soldiers what he had seen. 'No battle will ever be like this one,' he said; 'you will need all your strength to keep your ground and not be driven back.' 'Cursed be he who runs away,' answered they. 'There is not one of us but knows how to die.'

'The Infidels are many,' said Oliver again, 'and our Franks are but few. Roland, blow your horn; Charles will hear it and come to our help.'

'You are mad to say that,' replied Roland, 'for in France I should lose all my glory. No; but my sword Durendal knows how to strike, and our Franks will fight hard, and with what joy! It was an ill day for the Unbelievers when they came here, for none, I tell you, none will escape.'

'The Unbelievers are many,' said Oliver again, 'and we are very few. Roland, my friend, sound your horn; Charles will hear it, and come to our help.'

'I should be mad if I did so,' answered Roland. 'In France, when they knew it, I should lose all my glory! No; but my sword Durendal knows how to strike, and

our Franks will fight hard, and with what joy! It was an ill day for the Unbelievers when they came here, for none, I tell you, none will escape death.'

'O Roland, I pray you sound your horn, and Charles will hear it as he passes the defiles, and the Franks, I will swear it, will come to our help.'

'Now God forbid,' said Roland, 'that through me my parents should be shamed, or that I should bring dishonour on the fair land of France. No; but my sword Durendal knows how to strike. The Unbelievers have come to their death, and they will find it.'

'I see no dishonour,' said Oliver. 'With my own eyes have I beheld the Saracens of Spain; the mountains and the valleys alike are full of them. And how few are we!'

'Then we shall have the more fighting,' answered Roland. 'God forbid that I should turn my Franks into cowards! Rather death than dishonour. The more we kill, the better the Emperor will love us.'

Roland was brave, but Oliver was wise also, and the souls of both were as high as their words. 'Look round you, and think for a moment,' said Oliver; 'they are close to us, and Charles is far. Ah! if you would only have sounded your horn, the King would have been here, and our troops would not have been in danger. The poor rear-guard will never more be again such as it is to-day.'

'You speak foolishly,' answered Roland. 'Cursed be he whose heart is afraid. We will be strong to hold our ground. From us will come the blows, from us the battle.'

When Roland saw that he must give battle to the Infidels, he called his Franks and bade Oliver stand beside him. 'Do not say these things, my friend and comrade,' said he. 'The Emperor has left us twenty thousand picked men, with not one craven heart amongst them. For our liege lord, one must be ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, and cheerfully shed his blood and endure every ill. Strike with your lance, Oliver,

as I shall strike with Durendal, the sword which was given me by the King himself. And if I am slain, the man who wins it may say, "it was the sword of a noble vassal."'

Then from a little hill Turpin the Archbishop spoke to them. 'Charles has left us here; he is our King, and it is our duty to die for him. Christianity is in danger, and you must defend it. You cannot escape a battle; then fight, and ask God's pardon for your sins. In His Name, I will give you absolution, and already they wait for you in Paradise.' The Franks got off their horses and knelt on the ground, and the Archbishop blessed them. After this they mounted again, and placed themselves in order of battle.

Like lightning Roland on his horse Veillantif swept along the defiles, his face bright and smiling, his lance in rest. Oliver his friend was close behind him, and the Franks said to each other, 'Look at our champion!' He glanced proudly at the Infidels, but when his eyes fell upon the Franks they were soft and gentle. 'Go slowly, noble Barons,' said he; 'the Unbelievers to-day are seeking their martyrdom, and you will find richer booty than ever King of France did before.'

'Words of mine are useless,' said Oliver; 'you would not let Charles know of our peril, so you cannot blame him for our danger. Ride as hard as you can, and think only of two things, how best to give and receive blows. And do not forget the battle cry of King Charles.'

'Montjoie! Montjoie!' shouted the Franks, as the two armies came together with a crash.

It were long to tell of that battle and of the brave deeds that were done both by Christians and Unbelievers. Roland was there where the strife was hardest, and struck with his lance till the wood snapped. Then he drew Durendal from the scabbard and drove a bloody path through the ranks of the Infidels. Oliver and the Twelve Peers were not far behind him, and the ground was

red from the corpses of the pagans. 'Well fought, well fought!' cried the Archbishop, 'Montjoie, Montjoie!'

Oliver seemed to be everywhere at once. His lance was broken in two, and there was only the head and a splinter remaining, but it dealt more death blows than the sword of many another man. 'What are you doing, comrade?' cried Roland, when for a moment their horses touched. 'It is not wood that is needed in this battle, but well-tempered steel! Where is your sword Hauteclair, with its guard of gold and its handle of crystal?'

'I have no time to draw it,' said Oliver. 'There are too many blows to strike.'

Fiercer and fiercer grew the combat; thicker and thicker the corpses lay on the ground. Who could count the Franks who were stretched there, never more to see their wives or their mothers, or the comrades that awaited them in the defiles? But the number of the dead Saracens was greater even than theirs. And while they fought on Spanish soil, a strange tempest arose in France, thunder and wild winds, and a trembling of the earth; walls fell down, and at mid-day there was darkness. Men whispered to each other, 'It is the end of the world.' No, no; the end of all things was not yet, it was nature mourning for the death of Roland. At length the Saracens turned and fled, and the Franks pursued them, and Margaris the Valiant was left alone. His lance was broken, his shield pierced with holes, his sword-blade bloody, while he himself was sorely wounded. Heavens! what a warrior he would have made if he had only been a Christian. He rode fast to Marsile the King, and cried to him to mount his horse, and rally his men, and bring up fresh soldiers to deal the Franks a last blow, while they were exhausted from the long fight. 'It will be easy to revenge the thousands that they have slain,' said he; 'but if you let them slip now the tide of battle may turn against us.'

The King Marsile sent for fresh forces, and at sight

of them the Franks embraced each other for the last time, while the Archbishop promised them a speedy entrance into Paradise. 'The Emperor will avenge the treachery of Ganélon,' cried Roland, 'whether we live or die, but the worst part of the fight is before us, and we shall need all our strength to beat back the Unbelievers. They must not tell tales of cowardice in the fair land of France.' Then they spurred their horses and advanced in line, crying 'Montjoie! Montjoie!'

'Count Roland is not as other men,' said King Marsile, 'and as he is not content with two battles, we will give him a third. To-day Charles will cease to have power over Spain, and France will bow her head with shame.' And he gave his orders to the vanguard to go forward, while he himself waited on a little hill till the moment came to charge. Fierce was the shock as the two armies met, and bravely did their leaders fight, hand to hand and sword to sword. None struck harder than Turpin the Archbishop, who cursed his foes as he bore them from their saddles. 'He fights well,' said the Franks who watched his blows. But the Franks had fought long, and were faint and weary. They had lost much blood, and their arms were weak to strike. 'See how our brothers fall,' they whispered one to another, and Roland heard their groans, and his heart was near breaking. Thousands lay dead, thousands more were wounded, but still the battle went on. Horses without riders wandered about the field neighing for their masters. Then Marsile bade the trumpets sound, and his army gathered round the great standard with the Dragon, borne by a Saracen named Abimus. When Turpin the Archbishop caught sight of him, he dashed straight towards the banner, and with one blow of his mighty sword stretched the Unbeliever dead on the ground before the Dragon. 'Montjoie! Montjoie!' he cried, and the Franks heard, and said one to the other, 'Heaven send that Charles has many like him!' The lances

of the Franks were broken, and their shields were for the most part split in two, but three hundred naked swords still were left to deal blows at the shining helmets of the Infidels. 'Help! help! O King!' cried the Saracens, and Marsile heard, and answered, 'Better die than flee before these Franks. Let no one think of himself, but all press round Roland. If Roland dies, Charles is conquered. If Roland lives, all is over for us!' But Roland, with Oliver at his side, swept a clear space with Durendal, and none might come near him; the Archbishop kept his enemies at bay with his lance. Four times the Franks endured the shock of the onset, but at the fifth they were borne down by numbers, and now only sixty remained upon the ground.

Then Roland turned to Oliver and said, 'Fair sir and dearest friend, well may we pity France who will henceforth be widowed of such brave warriors. O Charles, my King, why do you not come to us? Oliver, tell me, how can we let him know what straits we are in?' 'There is no way,' said Oliver, 'and death rather than dishonour.'

'I will sound my horn,' said Roland, 'and Charles will hear, and come back through the defiles. I know that the Franks will retrace their steps and come to our aid.'

'That would be a shameful thing for them,' replied Oliver; 'all our kinsfolk would blush for us for ever, and we should likewise blush for ourselves. When I begged you to do it you would not, and now the time is past.'

'The battle is sore,' said Roland, 'I shall sound the horn, and Charles will hear it.'

'You refused to do it while yet there was time,' answered Oliver. 'If the Emperor had come then, so many of our best warriors would not be lying dead before us. It is not his fault that he is not here. But if you sound the horn now, I will never give you my sister, the fair Aude, for your wife.'

'Why do you bear such malice?' said Roland.

'It is your fault,' answered Oliver. 'Courage and

ROLAND WINDS HIS HORN
IN THE VALLEY OF RONCESVALLES

madness are not the same thing, and prudence is always better than fury. If so many Franks lie dead, it is your folly which has killed them, and now we can no longer serve the Emperor. If you would have listened to me, Charles would have been here, and Marsile and his Saracens would have been slain. Your courage, Roland, has cost us dear! For yourself, you will be killed and France be covered with dishonour. And before night falls our friendship will be ended.' Then he wept, and Roland wept also.

The Archbishop had been near, and heard their words. 'Do not quarrel at this hour,' he said. 'Your horn could not save them now. Charles is too far; it would take him too long to come. Yet sound it, for he will return and avenge himself on the Unbelievers. And they will take our bodies and put them on biers, and lay them on horses, and will bury us with tears of pity among the mountains, building up high walls round us, so that the dogs and the wild boar shall not devour us.' 'What you say is good,' answered Roland, and he lifted his horn, and its mighty voice rang through the mountains, and Charles heard the echo thirty miles away. 'Our men are fighting,' he cried, but Ganélon answered, 'If another man had said that, we should have called him a liar.' Count Roland was sorely wounded and the effort to sound the horn caused the blood to pour from his mouth. But he sounded it once more, and the echoes leaped far. Charles heard it in the defiles, and all his Franks heard it too. 'It is Roland's horn,' said the King, 'and he is fighting.'

'He is not fighting,' answered Ganélon; 'you are old, and your words are those of a child. Beside, you know how great is the pride of Roland; it is a marvel that God has suffered him to live so long. For a hare, Roland would sound his horn all day, and at this moment he is most likely laughing with his Twelve Peers over the fright he has caused us. And again, who is there who

would dare to attack Roland? No one. March on, sire; why make halt? France is still distant.'

Count Roland suffered grievous pain and a great wound was across his forehead. He sounded his horn for the third time, and Charles and his Franks heard it. 'That horn carries far,' said he, and Naimes answered, 'It is Roland who is calling for help. A battle is going on; some one has betrayed him. Quick, sire, he has called often enough. Sound your war-cry and hasten to his help.' Then the Emperor ordered his trumpets to be sounded, and his army gathered itself together and girded on their armour with what speed they might, and each man said to the other, 'If only we are in time to save Roland from death, what blows we will strike for him.' Alas, they are too late, too late!

But before the march back there was something for the Emperor to do. He sent for his head cook to appear in his presence, and he delivered the traitor Ganélon into his custody, and told him to treat his prisoner as he liked, for he had shown himself unworthy to mix with warriors. So the head cook did as he pleased with him, and beat him with sticks and put a heavy chain about his neck. And thus he guarded him till Charles came back.

How tall the mountains seemed to the returning army! how deep the valleys, and how swift the streams! but all the while the trumpets were sounded, that Roland might hear them and take heart. And as he rode, Charles had only one thought, 'If Roland is slain, shall I find one man alive?'

Roland stood looking at the mountains and at the plains, and wherever his eyes fell his dead comrades lay before him. Loudly he mourned their loss, and then he turned to Oliver, saying, 'Brother, we must die here with the rest of the Franks.' He spurred his horse and blew his horn, and dashed into the ranks of the foe, shouting 'Montjoie! Montjoie!' The remnant that was left closed eagerly round him, and the battle-cries were fierce

and loud. If Marsile and his host fled before them, others not less valiant remained behind, and Roland knew that the hour of his doom was come. And in valour, Oliver was no whit behind him, but flung himself into the thickest of the battle. It was the Caliph who gave Oliver his death blow. 'Charles made a mistake when he left you to guard these defiles,' said he, 'but your life will pay for many that you have slain.' But Oliver was not dead yet, and the taunt of the Caliph stung his blood. With all the strength he had left, he swung his sword Hauteclair on high, and it came down upon the Caliph's helmet with a crash, cleaving it clean through. 'Ah, pagan,' said he, 'you will never boast now of the prizes you have taken in battle.' Then 'Roland! Roland!' he cried, and Roland came. When he saw Oliver before him, livid and bleeding, he swayed on his horse as if he should faint. Oliver's sight was weak and troubled from loss of blood, and not hearing Roland's voice he mistook him for an enemy, and struck him a hard blow on his helmet. This blow restored Roland to his senses, and he sat upright. 'My friend,' said he, 'why have you done this? I am Roland, who loves you well, and never did I think you could lift your hand against me.'

'I hear you,' answered Oliver, 'I hear you speak, but I cannot see you. If I have struck you, forgive me, for I knew it not.'

'I forgive you from my heart,' said Roland, and they embraced each other for the last time.

The agony of death was falling upon Oliver; his sight had failed, his hearing was fast failing too. Slowly he dismounted from his horse and laid himself painfully on the ground, making, in a loud voice, the confession of his sins. Then he prayed God to bless Charlemagne, fair France, and Roland his friend, and after that his soul left him. And Roland returned and found him dead, and wept for him bitterly. At last he stood up

and looked around. Of all the twenty thousand men, not one was left except himself, and Turpin and Gautier. And these three placed themselves shoulder to shoulder, and sent many an Infidel to join his dead brothers. But the wounds they received in their bodies were without number, and at length the Archbishop tottered and fell. But they had not slain him yet; with a mighty struggle he rose to his feet and looked round for Roland. 'I am not conquered yet,' he said; 'a brave man dies but never surrenders.' Then with his good sword he rushed into the *mêlée* dealing death around him. Roland fought as keenly as his friend, but the moments seemed long till Charles brought them help. Again he sounded his horn, though the wound in his head burst out afresh with his effort. And the Emperor heard it, and stopped for an instant on his march. 'My Lords,' he said, 'things are going badly with us; we shall lose my nephew Roland to-day, for I know by the way he blows his horn that he has not long to live. Spur your horses, for I would fain see him before he dies. And let every trumpet in the army sound its loudest!' The Unbelievers heard the noise of the trumpets, which echoed through the mountains and valleys, and they whispered fearfully to each other, 'It is Charles who is coming, it is Charles!' It was their last chance, and a band of their best warriors rode straight at Roland. At that sight the strength rushed back into his veins, and he waited for them proudly. 'I will fight beside you,' he said to Turpin, 'and till I am dead I will never leave you. Let them strike as hard as they will; Durendal knows how to strike back.'

'Shame be upon every man who does not fight his best,' answered the Archbishop, 'for this is our last battle. Charles draws near, and will avenge us.'

The Infidels said afterwards that an army could not have wrought the ruin that was done that day by the Archbishop and Roland. Veillantif received thirty wounds in his body and then fell dead under his master.

But Roland leaped off, and smote the Saracens, who turned and fled before him. He was too weak to follow after them, and turned to see if the Archbishop still breathed. Kneeling by his side he unlaced Turpin's golden helmet, and bound up his gaping wounds. Then he pressed him closely to his heart and laid him gently on the ground. 'O friend, we must take farewell of each other, now all our comrades have gone before us. But let us do all we can for their bodies, which cannot be left lying here. I will myself go and seek their corpses, and bring them here and place them in rows before you.'

'Go,' answered the Archbishop, 'but do not stay long. Thanks be to God, the victory remains with you and me.'

Alone Roland searched the battle-field; he went up the sides of the mountains, he descended into the plains, and everywhere he saw the dead faces of his friends. One after another he brought them, and laid them at the feet of Turpin, and at the sight of their faces the Archbishop wept sore. Then he held up his hand to bless them for the last time. 'Noble Lords,' he said, 'you have fallen upon evil days. May God receive your souls into His Paradise. As for me, among all the pains I suffer, the worst is that never shall I see my Emperor again.'

Under a pine, close to a sweet-briar, the corpse of Oliver was lying, and Roland raised him in his arms and bare him to the Archbishop, where he laid him on a shield, near to the other peers. Then his heart broke with a cry, and he fell fainting beside Oliver. At the sight of Roland's grief the Archbishop's own sorrow grew double, and he stretched out his hand for the horn which lay near him. A stream ran down the valley of Roncevalles, and he dragged himself towards it, to fetch water to revive Roland. But he was too weak from the blood he had lost to reach the river, and he fell where he stood. 'Pardon for my sins,' he said, and died, the servant of

God and of Charles. The cry was heard by Roland, who was slowly coming back to life, and he rose to his feet and went to the dead Archbishop and crossed his hands upon his breast. 'Ah, noble Knight,' he said, 'in God's hands I leave you, for never since the Apostles has He had a more faithful servant. May your soul henceforth be free from sorrow, and may the Gates of Paradise stand wide for you to enter in!'

As he spoke, Roland knew that his own death was not far off. He made his peace with God, and took his horn in one hand and Durendal in the other. Then he mounted a small hill where stood two pine trees, but fell almost unconscious as soon as he reached the top. But a Saracen who had watched him, and had feigned to be dead, sprang up and seeing him cried, 'Conquered! he is conquered, the nephew of Charles! and his famous sword will be carried into Arabia'; so he grasped Durendal tightly in his fist, and pulled Roland's beard in derision. If the Saracen had been wise he would have left Roland's beard alone, for at his touch the Count was brought back to consciousness. He felt his sword being taken from him, and with his horn, which was always beside him, he struck the Saracen such a blow on his helmet that he dropped Durendal, and sank dead to the earth. 'Coward,' said Roland, 'who has told you that you might dare to set hands on Roland, living or dead? You were not worthy a blow from my horn.' Still death was pressing closer and closer, and Roland knew it. He rose panting for breath, his face as white as if he was already in the grave, and took Durendal out of its scabbard. Ten times he struck it hard on a brown rock before him, but the steel never gave way. 'O my faithful Durendal, do you know that the hour of our parting has come?' he cried. 'You have gained many battles for me, and won Charles many kingdoms. You shall never serve another master after I am dead.' Again he smote the rock with all his force, but the steel of Durendal glanced aside.

When Roland saw that he could not break it, he sat down and wept and lamented sore, calling back to him all the fights that they had fought together. Yet another time he struck, but the steel held good. Death was drawing nearer; what was he to do? Under a pine tree he laid himself down to die, his head resting on the green grass, his face turned towards the Infidels. Beneath him he placed Durendal and his horn. Alone on the mountain, looking towards Spain, he made the confession of his sins, and offered up his last prayer. Then he held up his right hand, and the Angels came and bore his soul to Paradise.

THE PURSUIT OF DIARMID

THE PURSUIT OF DIARMID

Fionn, the son of Cumhaill, rose early from his bed and went and sat upon the clearing of grass that stretched at the foot of the hill of Allen, where was the favourite palace of the Irish Kings of Leinster. He had stolen out alone, while his attendants were sleeping, but soon he was missed and two of his men followed him to the green plain.

'Why have you risen so early?' said Ossian as he came up.

'Since my wife died,' answered Fionn, 'little sleep has come to me, and better I like to be sitting by the hill-side than to toss restlessly between walls.'

'Why did you not tell us?' answered Ossian, 'for there is not a girl in the whole land of Erin whom we would not have brought you by fair means or foul.'

Dearing, who had till now kept silence, then spoke. 'I myself know of a wife who would be a fitting mate even for Fionn, son of Cumhaill — Grania, the daughter of Cormac, who is fairer of speech and form than the daughters of other men.'

Fionn looked up quickly at Dearing's words.

'There has been strife for long between me and Cormac,' said he, 'and it is not seemly that I should ask anything of him which might be refused. Therefore go you and Ossian and, as from yourselves, see if this marriage pleases him. It were better that he should refuse you, rather than me.'

'Farewell then,' said Ossian, 'but let no man know of our journey till we come back again.'

So the two went their ways, and found Cormac, King of Erin, holding a great council on a wide plain, with the chiefs and the great nobles gathered before him. He welcomed Ossian and Dearing with courtesy, and as he felt sure they bore some message, he bade the council meet again on the morrow. When the nobles and chiefs had betaken themselves to their homes, Ossian told the King of Erin that they had come to know his thoughts as to a marriage between his daughter and Fionn, son of Cumhaill.

'There is not the son of a King or of a great prince, a hero or a champion in the whole of Erin,' answered Cormac, 'whom my daughter has not refused to wed, and it is I whom all hold guilty for it, though it is none of my doing. Therefore betake yourselves to my daughter, and she will speak for herself. It is better that you be displeased with her than with me.'

Thereupon Ossian and Dearing were led by the King to the dwelling of the women, and they found Grania lying on a high couch. 'Here, O Grania,' said the King, 'are two of the men of Fionn, the son of Cumhaill, and they have come to ask you as wife for him. What is your answer?'

'If he be a fitting son-in-law for you, why should he not be a fitting husband for me?' said Grania. And at her words, her father ordered a banquet to be made in the palace for Ossian and Dearing, and sent them back to Fionn with a message summoning him to a tryst in a fortnight's time.

When Ossian and Dearing were returned into Kildare, they found Fionn and his men, the Fenians, on the hill of Allen, and they told their tale from the beginning to end. And the heart of Fionn grew light as he heard it, and the fortnight of waiting stretched long before him. But everything wears away at last, and so did those fifteen days; and on the last, Fionn assembled seven battalions of his Fenians from wherever they might be, and they

GRANIA QUESTIONS THE DRUID

set forth in troops for the great plain where Cormac, King of Erin, had given them tryst.

The King had made ready a splendid feast, and welcomed the new-comers gladly, and they ate and drank together. When the feast was over the Druid Derry sang songs before Grania, and she, knowing he was a man of wisdom, asked him why Fionn had come thither. 'If you know not that,' said the Druid, 'it is no wonder that I know it not.'

'I wish to learn it from you,' answered Grania.

'Well then,' replied the Druid, 'it is to ask you for wife that he is come.'

'I marvel,' said Grania, 'that it is not for Ossian that he asks me. For my father himself is not as old as Fionn. But tell me, I pray you, who is that softly spoken man with the curling black hair and ruddy countenance, that sits on the left hand of Ossian, the son of Fionn?'

'That is Diarmid, son of Dowd, the best lover in the whole world.'

'It is a goodly company,' said Grania, and ordered her lady to bring her the golden goblet chased with jewels. When it was brought she filled it up with the drink of nine times nine men, then bade her handmaid carry it to Fionn and say that she had sent it to him, and that he was to drink from it. Fionn took the goblet with joy, but no sooner had he drunk than he fell down into a deep slumber; and the same thing befel also Cormac, and Cormac's wife, and as many as drank of the goblet sent by Grania.

When all were sleeping soundly, she rose softly and said to Ossian, 'I marvel that Fionn should ask such a wife as I, for it were fitter that he should give me a husband of my own age than a man older than my father.'

'Say not so, O Grania,' answered Ossian, 'for if Fionn were to hear you, he would not have you, neither should I dare to ask for you.'

'Then you will not listen to word of marriage from me?' asked Grania.

'I will not,' answered Ossian, 'for I must not lay my hand on what Fionn has looked on.'

Then Grania turned her face to Diarmid Dowd and what she said was, 'Will you receive courtship from me, O Son of Dowd, since Ossian will not receive it?'

'I will not,' answered Diarmid, 'for whatever woman is betrothed to Fionn, I may not take her.'

'I will put you under bonds of destruction, O Diarmid,' said Grania, 'if you take me not out of this house to-night.'

'Those are indeed evil bonds,' answered Diarmid, 'and wherefore have you laid them on me, seeing there is no man less worthy to be loved by you than myself?'

'Not so, O son of Dowd,' said Grania, 'and I will tell you wherefore.

'One day the King of Erin held a muster on the great plain of Tara, and Fionn and his seven battalions were there. And a goaling match was played, and all took part, save only the King, and Fionn, and myself and you, O Diarmid. We watched till the game was going against the men of the kingdom of Erin, then you rose, and, taking the pole of the man who was standing by, threw him to the ground, and, joining the others, did thrice win the goal from the warriors of Tara. And I turned the light of my eyes upon you that day, and I never gave that love to any other from that time to this, and will not for ever. So to-night we will pass through my wicket-gate, and take heed you follow me.'

After she had spoken, Diarmid turned to Ossian and his companions. 'What shall I do, O Ossian, with the bonds that have been laid on me?'

'Follow Grania,' said Ossian, 'and keep away from the wiles of Fionn.'

'Is that the counsel of you all to me?' asked Diarmid.

'It is the counsel of us all,' said they.

Then Diarmid bade them farewell, and went to the top of the Fort, and put the shafts of his two javelins under him, and rose like a bird into the air, and found himself on the plain where Grania met him. 'I trow, O Grania,' said he, 'this is an evil course upon which you are come, for I know not to which corner of Erin I can take you. Return to the town, and Fionn will never harm you.'

'I will never go back,' answered Grania, 'and nothing save death shall part us.'

'Then go forward,' said Diarmid.

The town was a mile behind them when Grania stopped. 'I am weary, son of O'Dowd.'

'It is a good time to weary, Grania, for your father's house is still nigh at hand, and I give you my word as a warrior that I will never carry you or any woman.'

'You need not do that,' answered Grania, 'for my father's horses are in a fenced meadow by themselves, and have chariots behind them. Go and bring two horses and a chariot, and I will wait for you here.'

And Diarmid did what Grania bade him, and he brought two of the horses, and they journeyed together as far as Athlone.

'It is the easier for Fionn to follow our track,' said Diarmid at last, 'now we have the horses.'

'Then leave them,' cried Grania, 'one on each side of the stream, and we will travel on foot.' So they went on till they reached Galway, and there Diarmid cut down a grove, and made a palisade with seven doors of wattles, and gathered together the tops of the birch trees and soft rushes for a bed for Grania.

When Fionn and all that were in Tara awoke and found that Diarmid and Grania were not among them, a burning rage seized upon Fionn. At once he sent out trackers before him, and he followed them himself with

his men, till they reached the land of Connaught. 'Ah, well I know where Grania and Diarmid shall be sought,' cried Fionn. And Ossian and Dearing heard him, and said to each other, 'We must send Diarmid a warning, lest he should be taken. Look where Bran is, the hound of Fionn, and he shall take it, for he does not love Fionn better than he loves Diarmid, so, Oscar, tell him to go to Diarmid who is in Derry.' And Oscar told that to Bran, and Bran understood, and stole round to the back part of the army where Fionn might not see him; then he bounded away to Derry and thrust his head into Diarmid's bosom as he lay asleep.

At that Diarmid awoke and sprang up and woke Grania, and told her that Bran had come, which was a token that Fionn himself was coming. 'Fly then,' said Grania; but Diarmid would not fly. 'He may take me now,' said he, 'seeing he must take me some time.' At his words Grania shook with fear, and Bran departed.

All this while the friends of Diarmid took counsel together, and they dreaded lest Bran had not found them, and they resolved to give them another warning. So they bade the henchman Feargus to give three shouts, for every shout could be heard over three counties. And Diarmid heard them, and awoke Grania, and told her that it was a warning they had sent him of Fionn. 'Then take that warning,' said she. 'I will not,' answered Diarmid, 'but will stay in this wood till Fionn comes.' And Grania trembled when she heard him.

By-and-by the trackers came back to Fionn with news that they had seen Diarmid and Grania, and though Ossian and Diarmid's friends tried to persuade Fionn that the men had been mistaken, Fionn was not to be deceived. 'Well did I know the meaning of the three shouts of Feargus, and why you sent Bran, my own hound, away. But it shall profit him nothing, for Diarmid shall not leave Derry till he has paid me for every slight he has put upon me.'

'Great foolishness it is of you, O Fionn,' said Oscar, 'to think that Diarmid would stay in this plain waiting to have his head taken from him.'

'Who else would have cut down the trees, and have made a palisade of them, and cut seven doors in it? Speak, O Diarmid, is the truth with me or with Oscar?'

'With you, O Fionn,' said Diarmid, 'and truly I and Grania are here.'

When he heard this, Fionn bade his men surround Diarmid and take him, and Diarmid rose up and kissed Grania three times in presence of Fionn and his men, and Fionn, seeing that, swore that Diarmid should pay for those kisses with his head.

But Angus, the foster-father of Diarmid, knew in what straits his foster-son was, and he stole secretly to the place where Diarmid was hidden with Grania, and asked him what he had done to bring his head into such danger. 'This,' said Diarmid; 'Grania, the daughter of Cormac, King of Erin, has fled with me against my will to escape marriage with Fionn.'

'Then let one of you come under my mantle,' answered Angus, 'and I will carry you out of your prison.'

'Take Grania,' answered Diarmid. 'If I live, then will I follow you, but if not, carry her to her father, and let him deal with her as seems good.'

After that Angus put Grania under his mantle and they went their ways, and neither Fionn nor his Fenians knew of it.

When Angus and Grania had left him, Diarmid girded his arms upon him, and standing at one of the seven wattled doors, asked who stood behind. 'No foe to you,' answered a voice, 'but Ossian, the son of Fionn, and Oscar, the son of Ossian, and others who are your friends. Come out, and none will do you hurt.'

'I will not open the door until I find out where Fionn himself is.' And so it befel at six of the doors, and

Diarmid would not open them, least his friends should come under the wrath of Fionn. But as he drew near the seventh, and put his question, the answer came loud: 'Here are Fionn, the son of Cumhaill, and four hundred of his servants, and we bear you no love, and if you come out we will tear your bones in sunder.'

'I pledge my word,' said Diarmid, 'that yours is the first door by which I will pass,' and he rose into the air on the shafts of his javelins, with a bound as light as a bird's, and went far beyond Fionn and his people, and they knew nothing of it. Then he looked back and shouted that he had got the better of them, and followed after the track of Angus and Grania.

He found them warm in a hut with a fire in it, watching a wild boar roasting on a spit, and Grania's soul almost left her body for joy at seeing Diarmid. They told their stories before the fire, and when morning broke Angus rose and said to Diarmid, 'I must now depart, O son of O'Dowd, and this counsel I leave you. Go not into a tree having but one trunk, when you fly before Fionn. And go not to a cave of the earth having only one door, or to an island which can only be reached by one channel. And in whatever place you cook your meal, there eat it not; and in whatever place you eat, there lie not; and in whatever place you lie down to sleep, there rise not on the morrow.' So saying, he bade them farewell, and went his way.

The next day Diarmid and Grania journeyed up the Shannon, and they killed a salmon, and crossed the river to eat it, as Angus had told them. Soon they met a youth called Muadan, who wished to take service with them; and he was strong, and carried them over the rivers across their path. When evening came they found a cave, where Muadan spread out soft rushes and birch twigs for Diarmid and Grania to lie on, and as soon as they were asleep he stole into the next wood, and broke a long straight rod from a tree, and put a hair line and a

hook upon it, and a holly berry on the rod, and fished in the stream. In three casts he had taken three fish. That night they ate a good supper, and while Diarmid and Grania slept, Muadan kept watch for them.

At dawn Diarmid woke Grania and told her to watch while Muadan slept, as he was going to climb a hill near by, and see where they had best go.

He soon stood on the top and looked round about him. In front of him was a great company of ships bearing towards him out of the west. They landed at the foot of the hill where Diarmid stood, and he swiftly ran down to meet them and to ask of what country they were.

'We are three royal chiefs,' said they, 'and are sent by Fionn to take an enemy of his whom he has outlawed, called Diarmid O'Dowd. And with us are three fierce hounds whom we will loose upon his track. Fire burns them not, nor water drowns them, nor weapons wound them, and of us there are two thousand men. Moreover, tell us who you yourself are, and if you have any tidings of the son of O'Dowd.'

'I am but a warrior walking the world with the strength of my arm and the blade of my sword. But I warn you, you will have no common man to deal with if you meet Diarmid, whom but yesterday I saw.'

'Well, no one has been found yet,' said they.

'Is there wine in your ships?' asked Diarmid.

'There is,' answered they.

'If you would bring a tun of it here, I would do a trick for you.' So the wine was sent for, and Diarmid raised the cask up and drank from it, and took it up to the top of the hill and stood on it, and it glided with him to the bottom. And that trick he did thrice, standing on the tun as it came and went. But the strangers only scoffed, and they told him they could do a much better trick than that, and one of them jumped on the tun. Then, before it could move, Diarmid gave the tun a kick, and the young man fell, and the tun rolled over and

crushed him. And in like manner he did to many more, and the rest fled back to their ships.

The next morning they came to Diarmid where he stood on the hill, and he asked if they would like him to show them any more tricks, but they said they would rather hear some news of Diarmid first. 'I have seen a man who met him to-day,' answered Diarmid, and thereupon he laid his weapons on the ground and bounded upwards upon his javelin, coming down lightly beyond the host.

'If you call that a feat, then you have never seen a feat,' said a young warrior of the green Fenians—for so were they called from the colour of their armour. And he rose in like manner on his javelin and came down heavily on it, and it pierced his heart. Diarmid drew out the javelin, and another man took it and tried to do the same thing, and he also was slain, and so to the number of fifty. And they went to their ships while Diarmid returned to Muadan and Grania.

As soon as Diarmid awoke he went to the forest and cut two forked poles, which he took to the hill and placed upright, and he balanced the sword of Angus across the top. Then he rose lightly over and came down safely over it. 'Is there any man among you who can do that?' asked he of the men who had come up from their ships.

'That is a foolish question,' answered one, 'for no man ever did a feat in Erin which one of us could not do,' and he arose and leapt over the sword, but his foot caught in it, and he was cut in half. After that others tried, but none jumped that sword and lived. 'Have you any tidings of the son of O'Dowd?' asked the rest at last.

'I have seen him that saw him to-day,' answered Diarmid. 'I will seek tidings of him to-night.' And he returned to Grania.

When the sun rose Diarmid put on his coat of mail which no sword could pierce, and girded on the sword of

Angus, and took his two javelins, whose stroke none could cure. Grania trembled at this brave sight, but Diarmid soothed her fears, and went off to meet the Fenians.

'What tidings of the son of O'Dowd?' said they. 'Show us where he is, that we may take his head to Fionn.'

'The body and life of Diarmid are under my protection, and I will not betray him.'

'Then we will take your head, as Fionn is your enemy,' said they.

'Take it if you can,' answered Diarmid, and he drew his sword and struck at the head of the man next him, and it rolled away from the body. Then he rushed on the host, and slew them right and left, and none lived to tell the tale but the three green chiefs and a few men who went back to their ships. And they returned the next morning and renewed the fight, but Diarmid vanquished them, and binding them fast, left them where they were. For he knew that there were only four men in the world that could loose them.

After this Diarmid called to Grania and Muadan to come with him, and they travelled till Grania grew weary, and Muadan carried her on his back to the foot of a great mountain. And there they rested on the bank of the stream.

Meanwhile the few men who had been left alive abandoned their ship, and sought the three chiefs who were lying bound on the hill. They tried to loosen the bands of the captives, but only drew them tighter.

Soon they saw the witch-messenger of Fionn coming over the tops of the hills skimming from one to the other as lightly as a swallow.

'Who has made this great slaughter?' said she.

'Who are you that ask?' said they.

'I am Deirdre, the witch-messenger of Fionn, and he has sent me to look for you.'

'We know not who the man was,' answered they, 'but his hair was black and curly, and his countenance ruddy. And he has bound our three chiefs, so that we cannot loose them.'

'It was Diarmid himself,' said she; 'so loosen your hounds on his track, and I will send Fionn and his Fenians to help you.'

The men went down to their ships, and brought out their hounds, and loosened them on the track of Diarmid. The hounds made straight for the door of the cave, and the men followed them; and the hounds left the cave, and set forth westwards.

But Diarmid knew not of their coming till he saw silken banners waving, and three mighty warriors marching at the head. And he was filled with hatred of them, and went his ways, and Muadan took Grania on his back and bore her a mile along the mountain.

It was not long before they heard the hound coming, and Muadan bade Diarmid follow Grania, and he would keep the hound at bay. And when he had slain the hound, he departed after Diarmid and Grania.

Then the second hound was loosened, and Diarmid waited till he came close, so that he could take sure aim; and he cast his javelin into the hound and it fell dead like its fellow, and having drawn his javelin, he followed after Grania.

They had not gone much farther before the third hound was upon them. He bounded straight over the head of Diarmid, and would have seized Grania, but Diarmid took hold of his two hind legs, and swung him so fiercely against a rock that he was slain on the spot. And when that was done, Diarmid put on his arms, and slipped his little finger into the silken string of the javelin, and cast it straight at a youth in a green mantle that had outstripped his fellows, and slew him; and so to the rest, while Deirdre, the witch, wheeled and hovered about them all.

Now when news of the green Fenians that were bound by Diarmid reached Fionn he summoned his men, and they took the shortest ways till they reached the hill of slaughter. Then Fionn spoke, and what he said was, 'O Ossian, loose the three chiefs for me.'

'I will not,' replied Ossian, 'for Diarmid bound me not to loose any warrior that he should bind.'

'O Oscar, loose them,' said Fionn.

'Nay,' answered Oscar, 'rather would I place more bands upon them.' And so said the other two, and, before their eyes, the chiefs died of their bondage. So Fionn ordered their graves to be dug, and their flag laid upon their stone, and the heart of Fionn was heavy.

He raised his head and saw drawing near Deirdre, the witch, her legs trembling, her tongue raving, and her eyes dropping out of her head. 'I have great and evil tidings for you,' said she, and she told him of all the slaughter Diarmid had made, and how she herself had hardly escaped.

'Whither went the son of O'Dowd?' asked Fionn.

'I know not,' said she. At that Fionn and his Fenians departed, and wandered far before they could hear news of Diarmid.

On the road that led to the county of Galway, Fionn saw fifty stout warriors coming towards him. 'I know not who they are,' said Fionn, 'yet I think they are enemies of mine'; and, indeed, this proved to be so, for the leaders of the company told Fionn that his father and their fathers had fought in battle. 'Then you must give me payment for the death of my father,' said Fionn, 'and in return you shall have power among the Fenians.'

'But we have neither silver, nor gold, nor herds, O Fionn,' answered the two young men.

'I want none of these,' replied Fionn; 'the payment I ask is but the head of a warrior, or a handful of berries from the magic tree of Dooros.'

'Take counsel from me,' cried Ossian, 'for it is no light

matter to bring to Fionn that which he asks of you. The head is the head of Diarmid, son of Dowd, and if there were two thousand of you instead of fifty, Diarmid would not let it go.'

'And what are the berries that Fionn asks of us?' said they.

'Those berries would never have been heard of but for the jealousy of two women of different tribes, each of whom swore that her husband could hurl a pole farther than the other. So all the rest of the tribes came out to take part in the goaling match, and the game lasted long, and neither won a goal. At last the tribe of the Tuatha De Denann saw that the Fenians were stronger than they, and they went away bearing their provisions with them — nuts, and apples, and fragrant berries. And as they passed near the river Moy one of the berries fell, and turned into a quicken tree. No disease or sickness can touch anyone who eats three of its berries, and were he a hundred years old, the eater of them shall become no more than thirty.

'Since those days the tribe has set a guard over it. He is a crooked giant, with an eye in the midst of his forehead. No weapon can wound him, and he can only die of three strokes from his own iron club. At night he sleeps on the top of the tree, and by day watches at the foot. Around him is a wilderness, and the Fenians dare not hunt there, for fear of that terrible one. These are the berries which Fionn asks of you.'

But Aod, the son of Andala, spoke and declared that he would rather die seeking those berries than return to his own land with his head bowed in shame. So he and Angus his cousin took farewell of Ossian and went their ways, and as they drew near the forest they came on the track of Diarmid; and they followed to the tent, where they found him with Grania. 'Who are you?' asked Diarmid.

'We are Aod and Angus of the Clan Moirna,' said

Diarmid Seizes The Giant's Club

Aod, 'and it is your head that we seek, Diarmid, son of O'Dowd. For Fionn will either have that, or a handful of berries from the quicken tree.'

'Neither task is easy,' answered Diarmid, 'and woe to him that falls under the power of Fionn. He it was who slew your father, and surely that is payment enough. And whichever of these things you take him, you shall never have peace.'

'What berries are those that Fionn wants?' asked Grania, 'and why cannot they be got for him?' Then Diarmid told her the story, and how the country round was laid waste. 'But when Fionn put me under his ban,' continued he, 'the giant gave me leave to hunt there if I would, but forbade me to touch the berries. And now, O children of Moirna, will you fight me or seek the berries?'

'We will fight you first,' said they.

They fought long and well, but Diarmid got the better of them both, and bound them on the spot where they fell. 'You struck valiantly,' said Grania to Diarmid, 'but I vow that even if the children of Moirna go not after those berries, I will never rest in my bed till I have eaten them.'

'Force me not to break faith with the giant,' answered Diarmid, 'for he would not give them me more readily for that.'

'Loose our bonds,' said the children of Moirna, 'and we will go with you, and give ourselves for your sake.'

'Not so,' answered Diarmid, 'for the sight of him might kill you.'

'Then let us go to watch you fight, before you cut off our heads.' And Diarmid did so.

They found the giant asleep before the tree, and Diarmid pushed him with his foot.

The giant raised his head and looked at him: 'Are you fain to break peace, O Diarmid?'

'Not I,' answered he, 'but Grania my wife is ill, and

she longs for the taste of your berries, and it is to get a handful of them that I am now come.'

'If she should die,' said the giant, 'she should have none.'

'I may not do you treachery,' replied Diarmid, 'therefore I tell you I will have them by fair means or foul.'

The giant having heard that, stood up and dealt Diarmid three mighty strokes with his club, so that he staggered. Then, flinging down his weapons, he sprang upon the giant and grasped the club between his hands, hurling the giant to the ground by the weight of his body. Without giving him time to rise, Diarmid struck three blows with the club at the giant's head and he died without a word.

Aod and Angus had watched the combat, and now came forth. 'Bury the giant under the brushwood of the forest,' said Diarmid, 'so that Grania may not see him, and then go and bring her to me, for I am very weary.'

And the young men did so. 'There, Grania, are the berries you asked for,' said Diarmid when she came, but she swore that she would not taste a berry except he plucked it for her. So he plucked the berries for her and for the children of Moirna, and they ate their fill of them. 'Now go,' said he, 'take as many berries as you can to Fionn, and tell him that it was you who slew the giant.' And they gave thanks to Diarmid and left him, and he and Grania went to sleep on the top of the tree where the sweetest berries grew.

The children of Moirna reached Fionn, and bowed before him. 'We have slain the giant,' said they, 'and have brought you the berries, and now we shall have peace for the death of our father.' Fionn took the berries into his hand, and stooped down and smelt them. 'I swear,' he cried, 'that it was Diarmid O'Dowd who gathered these berries, and full sure I am that it was he who slew the

giant. I will follow him to the quicken tree, and it shall profit you nothing to have brought the berries to me.'

With seven battalions of his Fenians, he marched along Diarmid's track till he reached the foot of the quicken tree, and finding the berries with no watch on them, they ate their fill. The sun was hot, and Fionn said he would stay at the foot of the tree till it grew cooler, as well he knew that Diarmid was at the top. 'You judge foolishly,' answered Ossian, 'to think that Diarmid would stay up there when he knows that you are bent on his death.'

In spite of the heat and his long march, Fionn could not sleep, and called for a chess-board, and bade Ossian play with him. Fionn was the most skilled, and at length he said, 'There is but one move that can save you the game, O Ossian, and I dare all that are by to show you that move.' And in the top of the tree Diarmid heard him, and said, 'O Ossian, why am I not there to show you?'

'It is worse for you to be here in the power of Fionn, than for Ossian to lack that move,' answered Grania.

But Diarmid plucked one of the berries, and aimed it at the man which should be moved, and Ossian moved it, and turned the game against Fionn. And so he did a second time, and a third, when Ossian was in straits, and he won the game and the Fenians sent up a great shout.

'I marvel not at your winning, O Ossian, seeing that Oscar is doing his best for you, and that the skilled knowledge of Dearing, and the prompting of Diarmid, are all with you.'

'Now your eyes must be blinded, O Fionn, to think that Diarmid would stay in that tree when you are beneath him.'

'Which of us has the truth on his side, O Diarmid?' said Fionn, looking up.

'Never did you err in your wisdom, O Fionn,'

answered Diarmid, 'and truly, I and Grania are here.' Then, in presence of them all, he kissed Grania three times. 'Thou shalt give thy head for those three kisses,' said Fionn.

So Fionn and the four hundred that were with him surrounded the quicken tree, and he bade them on pain of death not to let Diarmid pass through them. Further, he promised to whichever man should go up the tree and fetch down Diarmid, he would give him arms and armour, and whatever place his father held among the Fenians. But Angus heard what Fionn said, and being somewhat of a wizard, came to Diarmid's help, without being seen of the Fenians. And one man after another rolled down the tree.

Howbeit, both Diarmid and Angus felt that this was no place for Grania, and Angus said he would take her with him.

'Take her,' answered Diarmid; 'if I be alive this evening I will follow you. If not, send Grania to her father at Tara.' And with that Angus bade farewell to Diarmid, and flung his magic mantle over himself and Grania, and they passed out and no man knew aught of them till they reached the river Boyne.

When they were safely gone, Diarmid, son of O'Dowd, spoke from the top of the tree. 'I will go down to you, O Fionn, and to the Fenians, and will deal slaughter and discomfiture upon you and your people, seeing that I know your wish is to allow me no escape, but to work my death after some manner. Moreover, I have no friend who will help or protect me, since full often have I wrought havoc among the warriors of the world, for love of you. For there never came on you battle or strait, but I would plunge into it for your sake, and for that of the Fenians. Therefore I swear, O Fionn, that thou shalt not get me for nothing.'

'Diarmid speaks truth,' said Oscar. 'Grant him, I pray you, mercy and forgiveness.'

Diarmid & Grania in the Quicken Tree

'I will not,' answered Fionn, 'till he has paid for every slight put upon me.'

'It is a foul shame in thee to say that,' said Oscar, 'and I pledge the word of a soldier that unless the heavens fall upon me or the earth opens under my feet, I will not suffer you nor your Fenians to strike him a single blow, and I will take him under my protection, and keep him safe in spite of you all. Therefore, O Diarmid, come down out of the tree, since Fionn will not grant you mercy. I will pledge that no evil will come to you to-day.'

So Diarmid rose, and stood upon the topmost bough of the tree, and leapt light and birdlike, by the shafts of his spears, and passed out far beyond Fionn and the Fenians of Erin. And he and Oscar went their way, and no tidings were heard of them till they reached Grania and Angus on the banks of the Boyne.

After Diarmid and Oscar had departed, Fionn ordered a ship to be made ready, and as soon as it was done he marched on board with a thousand of his warriors and set sail for the north of Scotland. When he arrived at the harbour nearest the King's palace, he moored his ship and took the path to the palace, where the King received him kindly, and gave him food and drink. Then Fionn told the King why he was come. 'And truly you should give me a host,' said he, 'for Diarmid it was who slew your father and two brothers and many of your men besides.'

'That is so,' answered the King, 'and I will give you my two sons, with a thousand men to each of them.' Joyful was Fionn to hear this, and he departed with his company, and nothing was known of them till they reached the Boyne, where Fionn challenged Diarmid and Angus to battle.

'What shall I do touching this, O Oscar?' asked Diarmid.

'We will give them battle and slay them all,' answered Oscar.

On the morrow Diarmid and Oscar rose, and put on their armour and went their way to the place of combat, where they bound the rims of their shields together, so that they might not be parted in the fight. Next they proclaimed battle against Fionn, and the Scots said they would land and fight them first. They rushed together, and Diarmid passed under them and through them and over them, as a whale would go through small fish. And all of them fell by Diarmid and Oscar before night came, while they themselves had neither cut nor wound.

When Fionn saw that great slaughter he and his men put out to sea, and sailed to the cave where dwelt an old woman, Fionn's nurse. And he told her his story from the beginning. 'I will go with you,' said she, 'and will practise magic against him.'

They came to the Boyne, and the witch threw magic over Fionn and his Fenians, so that the men of Erin knew not they were there; and that day Diarmid was hunting alone, for he had parted from Oscar the day before. Now the witch knew this, and she flew to where a water-lily leaf lay with a hole in the middle of it, and as the wind lifted the leaf from the surface of the water she cast deadly darts at Diarmid through the hole, and did him great hurt. And every evil that had come upon him was little compared with that evil. Then he felt that unless he could strike her through the hole in the leaf she would slay him on the spot; so he lay down on his back and took his javelin in his hand, and reached her through the hole, and she fell dead.

After that he cut off her head and carried it with him to Angus.

The next day Diarmid rose early and Angus with him, and they went to Fionn and asked if he would make peace with Diarmid, and also to Cormac, King of Erin, with a like question; and they agreed thereto, and asked Diarmid

what terms he wanted. Diarmid demanded several of the best baronies in Ireland, and he got them, and they blotted out all Diarmid had done during the sixteen years of his outlawry, and Cormac gave his other daughter to Fionn that he might let Diarmid be, and there was peace for many years, and Diarmid prospered mightily, and had four sons and one daughter.

THE GREEN BOAR

But one day a restless spirit seized on Grania, and she told Diarmid that it was a shame to them that the two greatest men in Erin, Cormac and Fionn, had never visited their house, and she wished to give a splendid feast and to bid them to it. And this was done: for a year Grania and her daughter were preparing the feast, and when it was ready the guests came, and stayed feasting for a year.

It was on the last day of the year that in his sleep Diarmid heard the voice of a dog that caused him to start and to wake Grania. 'What is the matter?' said she, and Diarmid told her. 'May you be kept safely,' answered Grania; 'lie down again.' So Diarmid lay down, but no sleep would come to him, and by-and-by he heard the hound's voice again, but again Grania kept him from seeking it. This time he fell into a deep slumber, and a third time the hound bayed, and he woke and said to Grania, 'Now it is day, and I will go.' 'Well, then,' said she, 'take your large sword and the red javelin.' But Diarmid answered, 'No, I will take the little sword that bites, and the small javelin, and my favourite hound on a chain.'

So he went without stopping to the top of a mountain, where Fionn stood alone. Diarmid asked if he was hunting, and Fionn said no, but that after midnight a company of Fenians had come out, and one of the hounds

had crossed the track of the wild boar of Ben Gulbain, which had slain thirty Fenians that morning.

'He is even now coming up this mountain against us,' added he, 'so let us leave the place.'

'I will never leave the place for him,' answered Diarmid.

'Know you not that when you were a child a wizard prophesied that you should live as long as a green boar without ears or tail, and that it was by him that you should fall at last?'

'No, I knew nothing of these things, but for all that I will not leave the mountain,' answered Diarmid. And Fionn went his way, and Diarmid stood alone on the top. 'It was to slay me that you made this hunt, O Fionn; and if it is fated that I die here, die I must.'

The wild boar came tearing up the mountain, and behind him followed the Fenians. Diarmid slipped his hound, but it profited him nothing, for he did not await the boar, but fled before him. 'Woe unto him that doeth not the counsel of a good wife,' said Diarmid to himself, 'for Grania bade me take my best hound and my red javelin.' Then he aimed carefully at the boar's head, and smote him in the middle of his forehead; but he did not so much as cut one of his bristles, far less pierce his skin. At that Diarmid felt his heart quail like those of weaker men, and he drew his sword and dealt the boar a stout blow, but the sword broke in two; and the beast stood unharmed. With a spring he drew himself upon Diarmid, so that he tripped and fell, and somehow when he rose up he was sitting astride the back of the boar, with his face looking towards the tail. The boar tried to fling him off but could not, though he rushed down the hill and jumped three times backwards and forwards out of the river at the foot; but Diarmid never stirred, and at last the boar dashed up the hill again, and Diarmid fell from his back. Then the boar sprang upon Diarmid with a mighty spring, and wounded him

THE DEATH OF DIARMID

mortally; but Diarmid swung his broken sword about his head as he lay, and hit the boar such a blow on his head that where he stood there he fell dead.

Not long after that Fionn and his Fenians came up and watched Diarmid, who was dying fast. 'It pleases me well to see you in that plight, O Diarmid,' said Fionn, 'and I grieve that all the fair women of Erin cannot see you also.'

'If you wished you could still heal me, O Fionn,' answered Diarmid.

'How could I heal you, O Diarmid?'

'Easily,' answered Diarmid. 'Was it not given to you that whoever should drink from the palms of your hands should become young and whole again?'

'You have not deserved that I should give you that drink,' said Fionn.

'That is not true, O Fionn, well have I deserved it of you. Was it not I who avenged you and slew fifty of your enemies who tried to set on fire the house wherein you were holding your great feast? Had I asked you for such a drink then, you would have given it to me, and now I deserve it no less.'

'Not so,' answered Fionn; 'you have deserved ill at my hands since that time, and little reason have I to give you drinks or any good thing. For did you not bear away Grania from me before all the men of Erin the night you were set as guard over her in Tara?'

'The guilt of that was not mine, O Fionn, but Grania besought me, else I would not have failed to keep my charge for all the bonds in the world. And well do I deserve you should give me a drink, for many is the day since I came among the Fenians in which I have perilled my life for your sake. Therefore you should not do me this foul treachery. And soon a dire defeat will come upon the Fenians, and few children will be left to them to carry on the race. It is not for you that I grieve, O Fionn, but for Ossian and for Oscar, and for the rest

of my faithful comrades. And you shall lack me sorely yet, O Fionn.'

'I am near of kin to you, O Fionn,' said Oscar, 'but you shall not do Diarmid this wrong. Further, I swear that were any other prince in the world to have done this to Diarmid, we would have seen whose hand was strongest and who should bring him a drink.'

'I know no well upon this mountain,' answered Fionn.

'That is not true,' replied Diarmid, 'for nine paces from this is the best well of pure water in the world.'

So Fionn went to the well and filled his palms with water; but he had only come half way to where Diarmid lay when he let the water run down between his fingers. 'The water would not stay in my hands,' he said, as he reached the rest.

'You spilt it of your will,' answered Diarmid.

For the second time Fionn set out to fetch the water, but returning he thought of Grania, and let it run upon the ground. Diarmid saw and sighed piteously. 'I swear by my sword,' cried Oscar, 'that if this time you bring not that water either you or I, O Fionn, shall leave our body here.'

And Fionn trembled when he heard those words, and brought back the water, but as he came to his side the life went out of Diarmid. And the company of the Fenians raised three exceeding great cries; while Oscar looked fiercely at Fionn, and told him it had been better for the Fenians had Fionn himself died, and not Diarmid. Then Fionn left the top of the mountain, leading Diarmid's hound, and his Fenians came after. But Ossian and Oscar and two others returned and laid their four mantles over Diarmid, and when they had done that they went their ways after Fionn.

Now Grania was standing on the ramparts of her house when she saw Fionn and the Fenians approaching. She said to herself that if Diarmid were alive it was not

Fionn who would lead his hound, and at this thought she swooned and fell heavily over the battlements. Ossian's heart was full of pity, and he bade Fionn and the Fenians to go, and ran himself to help her, but she lifted her head and begged that Fionn would leave her the hound of Diarmid. Fionn said No, he would not; but Ossian took the stag-hound from Fionn's hand and put it into Grania's, and then followed after the Fenians.

When they had gone, Grania uttered a loud and grievous cry that was heard far round, so that the people came to her and asked her what was the matter, and when she told them that Diarmid was dead they sat down and wailed also. After that Grania sent five hundred men to bring her the body of Diarmid.

That night it was shown to Angus in a dream that Diarmid was dead on Ben Gulbain; and he was carried by the wind, and reached the place at the same moment as Grania's men, who knew him, and held out the insides of their shields to him in token of peace. And they sent up three exceeding great cries, which were heard even at the gates of heaven.

Then Angus spoke: 'There has not been one night since I took you, an infant of nine months old, to the Boyne that I have not watched over you, O Diarmid, until last night, when Fionn did you basely to death, for all you were at peace with him.' And he told Grania's men he himself would bear Diarmid's body to the Boyne. So the dead man was placed on a gilded bier with his javelins over him pointed upwards, and the men of Grania returned to their mistress, and said as Angus had bade them.

The first thing she did was to send messengers to her sons, who lived each in his own house, and bade them come with their followings to the house of Grania, for that their father Diarmid had been foully slain by Fionn. They all came forthwith, and after they had eaten and

drunk she pointed to the weapons and arms of Diarmid, and said they were theirs, and by them they should learn all arts of brave men, till they should reach their full strength, and after that they should avenge themselves on Fionn.

The sayings of Grania were whispered in the ears of Fionn, and a great fear fell upon him. He called his Fenians together, and told them how the sons of Diarmid had gone to their mother, and returned to their own homes again. 'It is to rebel against me that they have done this,' and he asked counsel in the matter. 'The guilt is yours and no other man's,' spoke Ossian, 'and we will not stand by you, for you slew Diarmid in time of peace.'

Without Ossian, Oscar, and their men Fionn knew that he could not conquer Grania, and resolved to try what cunning would do. So he slipped away secretly, and went to her house, and greeted her with soft words, in reply to her bitter ones. But so cunning was he that at last her wrath broke down, and she agreed to go with him back to his Fenians.

It was a long while before the Fenians knew who that could be walking by the side of Fionn, but when they did they laughed and mocked till Grania bowed her head for shame. 'This time, O Fionn, you will guard her well,' said Ossian.

For seven years the sons of Diarmid exercised themselves in all the skill of a warrior, and then they came back to Grania's house. There they learned how long ago Grania had fled with Fionn, and in wrath they set out to seek Fionn, and proclaimed battle against him. Fionn sent Dearing to ask how many men it would take to fight them, and they answered that each one of them would fight a hundred. So Fionn brought four hundred men, and the young men rushed under them and through them and over them, till there was not a man left. 'What shall we do concerning these youths, O Grania,' said Fionn, 'for I have not men enough to go through many such fights?'

'I will visit them,' answered Grania, 'and will try to make peace between you.'

And Fionn bade her offer them terms such as no man then living would refuse, yet for long the young men did refuse them. But at the last the prayers of Grania prevailed, and peace was made, and Fionn and Grania lived together till they died.[1]

[1] From the Transactions of the Ossianic Society.

SOME ADVENTURES
OF
WILLIAM SHORT NOSE

SOME
ADVENTURES OF WILLIAM SHORT NOSE

William Short Nose was also styled William of Orange, quite a different man from the one who came to be King of England, although they both took their title from the same small town in the south of France. This William of Orange spent his life battling with the Saracens in the south of France, and a very hard task he had, for their numbers seemed endless, and as fast as one army was beaten another was gathered together.

Now by a great effort the Infidels had been driven back south in the year 732, but before a hundred years had passed they had again crossed the Pyrenees and were streaming over France, south of the Loire, and, what was worse, the men of Gascony were rising too. Someone had to meet the enemy and to crush the rebels, and of all the subjects of King Louis, the son of the Emperor Charles, no one was so fit to lead the army of the Franks as William Short Nose, Count of Orange, husband of the Lady Gibourc.

It was at the Aliscans that he met them, and a great host they were, spreading over the country till whichever way you looked you saw men flocking round the Golden Dragon, which was the banner of the Saracens. But it was not Count William's way to think about numbers, and he ordered his trumpeters to sound the charge. Spurring his horse, he dashed from one part of the fight to the other, striking and killing as he went, and heeding as little the wounds that he got as those that he gave,

and *they* were many. The Franks whom he led followed after him, and slew the Pagans as they came on; but the Christians were in comparison but a handful, and their enemies as the sands of the sea. The young warriors whom William had brought with him were prisoners or dying men, and from far he saw Vivian, whom he loved the best, charging a multitude with his naked sword. 'Montjoie! Montjoie!' cried he, 'O noble Count! O Bertrand my cousin, come to my aid! O my Lady Gibourc, never more shall my eyes look upon you!'

Bertrand heard and pressed to his side. 'Ride to the river,' he said, 'and I will protect you with my life'; but Vivian was too weak even to sit on his horse, and fell half fainting at the feet of Bertrand.

At this moment there rode at them a large troop of Saracens, headed by their King Haucebier, and the Christian Knights knew that all was lost. 'It is too late now for me to think of life,' said Vivian, 'but I will die fighting,' and again they faced their enemies till Bertrand's horse was killed under him. Then Vivian seized the horse of a dead Infidel, and thrust the bridle into Bertrand's hand: 'Fly, for God's sake, it is your only chance. Where is my uncle? If he is dead, we have lost the battle.'

But Bertrand did not fly, though every instant made the danger more deadly. 'If I forsake you, if I take flight,' he said, 'I shall bring eternal shame upon myself.'

'No, no,' cried Vivian, 'seek my uncle down there in the Aliscans, and bring him to my aid.'

'Never till my sword breaks,' answered Bertrand, and laid about him harder than ever. And to their joy they heard a war cry sounding in their ears, and five Frankish Counts, cousins of Vivian and of Bertrand, galloped up. Fight they did with all their might, but none fought like Vivian. 'Heavens! what a warrior!' cried the Counts as they saw his blows, while the Saracens asked themselves

if the man whom they had killed at mid-day had been brought back to life by the help of devils. 'If we let them escape now we shall be covered with shame before Mahomet,' said they, 'but ere night falls William shall acknowledge that he is conquered.'

'Indeed!' said Bertrand, and with his cousins he fell upon them till they fled.

The Counts were victors on this field, but, wounded and weary as they were, another combat lay before them, for a force of twenty thousand Saracens was advancing from the valley. Their hearts never failed them, but they had no strength left; the young Counts were all taken prisoners, except Vivian, who was left for dead by the side of a fountain where he had been struck down. 'O Father in Heaven,' he said, feeling his life going from him, 'forgive me my sins, and help my uncle, if it is Thy holy will.'

William Short Nose was still fighting, though he knew that the victory lay with the Unbelievers and their hosts. 'We are beaten,' he said to the fourteen faithful comrades that stood by him. 'Listen as you will, no sound of our war cry can be heard. But by the Holy Rood, the Infidels will know no rest while I am alive. I will give my forefathers no cause for shame, and the minstrels shall not tell in their songs how I fell back before the enemy.'

They then gave battle once more, and fought valiantly, till all lay dead upon the ground, save only William himself.

Now the Count knew that if the Infidel was ever to be vanquished and beaten out of fair France he must take heed of his own life, for the task was his and no other man's; so he turned his horse's head towards Orange, and then stopped, for he saw a troop of freshly landed Saracens approaching him along the same road.

'The whole world is full of these Infidels!' he cried in anger; 'cursed be the day when they were born. Fair

God, you alone can save me. My Lady Gibourc, shall I ever again behold you? My good horse,' added he, 'you are very tired. If you had had only five hours' rest, I would have led you to the charge; but I see plainly that I can get no help from you, and I cannot blame you for it, as you have served me well all day, and for this I thank you greatly. If ever we reach Orange you shall wear no saddle for twenty days, your food shall be the finest corn, and you shall drink out of a golden trough. But how should I bear it if the Pagans captured you and carried you to Spain?'

And the horse understood as well as a man, and he threw up his head, and pawed the ground, and his strength came back to him as of old. At this sight William Short Nose felt more glad than if he had been given fourteen cities.

But no sooner had he entered a valley that led along the road to Orange than he saw a fresh body of Pagans blocking one end. He turned to escape into another path, but in front of him rode a handful of his enemies. 'By the faith that I swore to my dear Lady Gibourc,' he said, 'I had better die than never strike a blow,' and so went straight at Telamon, their leader, on his horse Marchepierre. 'William!' cried the Saracen, 'this time you will not escape me.' But the sun was in his eyes, and his sword missed his aim. Before he could strike another blow William had borne him from his horse and galloped away on Bausant.

The mountain that he was climbing now was beset with Infidels, like all the rest, and William looked in vain for a way of escape. He jumped from his horse and rubbed his flanks, saying to him the while, 'Bausant, what will you do? Your sides are all bloody, and you can scarcely stand; but remember, if once you fall it means my death.' At these words Bausant neighed, pricked up his ears and shook himself, and as he did so the blood seemed to flow strongly in his veins, as of old.

VIVIAN'S LAST CONFESSION

Then the Count rode down into the field of the Aliscans, and found his nephew Vivian lying under a tree.

'Ah! my God,' cried William, 'what sorrow for me! To the end of my life I shall mourn this day. Earth, do thou open and swallow me! Lady Gibourc, await me no longer, for never more shall I return to Orange!'

So he lamented, grieving sore, till Vivian spoke to him. The Count was full of joy to hear his words, and, kneeling beside the youth, took him in his arms, and bade him, as no priest was there, confess his sins to him, as to his own father. One by one Vivian remembered them all, then a mist floated before his eyes, and, murmuring a farewell to the Lady Gibourc, his soul left the world.

William laid him gently down on his shield, and took another shield for covering, and turned to mount his horse, but at this his heart failed him.

'Is it you, William, that men look to as their leader, and whom they call Fierbras, who will do this cowardly deed?' he said to himself, and he went back to his nephew's side, and lifted the body on to his horse, to bury it in his city of Orange.

He had done what he could to give honour to Vivian, but he might as well, after all, have left him where he fell, for in a fierce combat with some Pagans on the road the Count was forced to abandon his nephew's body and fight for his own life. He knew the two Saracens well as brave men, but he soon slew one, and the other he unhorsed after a struggle.

'Come back, come back,' cried the Unbeliever; 'sell me your horse, for never did I behold his like! I will give you for him twice his weight in gold, and set free besides all your nephews that have been taken prisoners.' But William loved his horse, and would not have parted with him to Charles himself; so he cut off the Saracen's head with his sword, and mounted his horse Folatisse, taking the saddle and bridle off Bausant so that he might the more easily escape from the Pagans.

At length, after fighting nearly every step of the way, he saw the towers of Orange before him, and his palace, Gloriette, where dwelt his wife, the Lady Gibourc. 'Ah, with what joy did I leave these walls,' he said to himself, 'and how many noble Knights have I lost since then! Oh! Gibourc, my wife, will you not go mad when you hear the tidings I have brought!' And, overcome with grief, the Count bowed his head on the neck of his horse.

When he recovered himself he rode straight to the City Gate, and commanded the porter to let him in. 'Let down the drawbridge,' called he, 'and be quick, for time presses.' But he forgot that he had changed his own arms, and had taken instead those of Aeroflé the Saracen; therefore the porter, seeing a man with a shield and pennon and helmet that were strange to him, thought he was an enemy, and stood still where he was. 'Begone!' he said to William; 'if you approach one step nearer, I will deal you a blow that will unhorse you! Begone, I tell you, and as quick as you can, or when William Short Nose returns from the Aliscans it will be the worse for you.'

'Fear nothing, friend,' replied the Count, 'for I am William himself. I went to the Aliscans to fight the Saracens, and to help Vivian; but all my men are dead, and I only am left to bring these evil tidings. So open the gates, for the Saracens are close behind.'

'You must wait a moment,' answered the porter, and he quitted the turret where he had been standing and hastened to the chamber of the Lady Gibourc. 'Noble Countess,' cried he, 'there knocks at the drawbridge a Knight in pagan armour, who seems fresh from battle, for his arms are bloody. He is tall of stature and bears himself proudly, and he says he is William Short Nose. I pray you, my lady, come with me and see him for yourself.'

The face of Gibourc grew red when she heard the

porter's words, and she left the Palace and mounted the battlements, where she called across the fosse, 'Warrior, what is your will?'

'Oh, lady!' answered he, 'open the gate, and that quickly. Twenty thousand Saracens are close upon my track; if they reach me, I am a dead man.'

'You cannot enter,' replied Gibourc. 'I am alone here except for this porter, a priest, a few children, and some ladies whose husbands are all at the war. Neither gate nor wicket will be opened until the return of my beloved lord, William the Count.' Then William bowed his head for a moment, and two tears ran down his cheeks.

'My lady, I am William himself,' said he. 'Do you not know me?'

'Infidel, you lie,' replied Gibourc. 'Take off your helmet, and let me see who you are!'

But the Count in his thought felt the earth trembling under his feet from the step of the accursed ones. 'Noble Countess,' cried he, 'this is no time to parley. Look round you! Is not every hill covered with Pagans?'

'Ah, now I know you are not William,' answered she, 'for all the Pagans in the world would never have stirred him with fear. By St. Peter! neither gate nor wicket shall be opened till I have seen your face. I am alone and must defend myself. The voices of many men are alike.'

Then the Count lifted his helmet: 'Lady, look and be content. I am William himself. Now let me in.'

Gibourc knew that it was indeed the Count who had returned, and was about to order the gates to be opened when there appeared in sight a troop of Saracens escorting two hundred prisoners, all of them young Knights, and thirty ladies with fair white faces. Each one was loaded with chains, and they cowered under the blows of their captors. Their cries and prayers for mercy reached the

ears of Gibourc, and, changing her mind, she said quickly: 'There is the proof that you are not William my husband, the "Strong Arm," whose fame has spread far! For *he* would never have suffered his brethren to be so shamefully entreated while he was by!'

'Heavens!' cried the Count, 'to what hard tests does she put me! But if I lose my head I will do her bidding, for what is there that I would *not* do for the love of God and of her!' Without a word more he turned, and, relacing his helmet, spurred his horse at the Saracens with his lance in rest. So sudden and fierce was his attack that the foremost riders fell back on those behind, who were thrown into confusion, while William's sword swept him a path to the centre, where the prisoners stood bound. The Pagans expected the city gates to open and a body of Franks to come forth to destroy them, and without waiting another moment they turned and fled. Though the prisoners were free, William pursued the enemy hotly.

'Oh, fair Lord!' called Gibourc, who from the battlements had watched the fight, 'come back, come back, for now indeed you may enter.' And William heard her voice, and left the Saracens to go where they would while he struck the chains off the prisoners, and led them to the gates of Orange, while he himself rode back to the Saracens.

Not again would the Lady Gibourc have reason to call him coward.

And Gibourc saw, and her heart swelled within her, and she repented her of her words. 'It is my fault if he is slain,' she wept. 'Oh, come back, come back!'

And William came.

Now the drawbridge was let down before him, and he entered the city followed by the Christians whom he had delivered, and the Countess unlaced his helmet, and bathed his wounds, and then stopped, doubting.

'You cannot be William after all,' said she, 'for

William would have brought back the young kinsmen who went with him; and Guy and Vivian, and all the young Barons of the country side. And William would

have been encircled by minstrels singing the great deeds he had done.'

'Ah, noble Countess, you speak truth,' answered he.

'Henceforth my life will be spent in mourning, for my friends and comrades who went to war with me are lying dead at the Aliscans. Vivian is dead also, but Bertrand and Guy, Guichard the bold, and Gerard the brave, are captives in the Saracen camp.'

Great was the sorrow in the city of Orange, great likewise was the sorrow in the palace of her lord, where the ladies of the Countess mourned for their husbands. But it was Gibourc herself who first dried her tears, and roused herself from her grief for Vivian and others whom she had loved well. 'Noble Count,' she said, 'do not lose your courage, and let the Infidels crush your spirit. Remember it is not near Orleans, in safety, that your lands lie, but in the very midst of the Saracens. Orange never will have peace till they are subdued. So send messengers to Paris, to your brother-in-law King Louis, and to your father Aimeri, asking for aid. Then march upon the Saracens, and rescue the captives that are in their hands before they are carried across the sea.'

'Heavens!' cried William, 'has the world ever seen so wise a lady?'

'Let no one turn you from your road,' she went on. 'At the news of your distress Ermengarde of Pavia, whom may God bless, and Aimeri with the white beard, and all the Barons that are your kin, will fly to your help. Their numbers are as the sands of the sea.'

'But how shall I make them believe in what has befallen us?' answered William. 'Gibourc, sweetheart, in France they would hold any man mad who brought such a message. If I do not go myself I will send nobody, and go myself I will not, for I will not leave you alone again for all the gold in Pavia.'

'Sir, you must go,' said Gibourc, weeping. 'I will stay here with my ladies, of whom there are plenty, and each will place a helmet on her head, and hang a shield round her neck, and buckle a sword to her side, and with the help of the Knights whom you have delivered we

shall know how to defend ourselves if the Unbelievers should seek to take the city by assault.'

William's heart bounded at her words; he took her in his arms, and promised that he himself would go, and more, that he would never lie soft nor eat delicately nor kiss the cheek of any lady, however fair, till he returned again to Orange.

Thus William Short Nose set forth and the next day passed through Orleans. There he met with his brother Ernaut, who had ridden home from escorting King Louis back to Paris. Ernaut promised his help and that of his father and brothers, but counselled William to go to Laon, where a great feast would be held and many persons would be assembled. The Count followed Ernaut's counsel, but refused the troop of Knights and men-at-arms which Ernaut offered him, liking rather to ride alone.

He made his entrance into Laon on Sunday, and the people laughed at him and made jests on his tall thin horse; but William let them laugh, and rode on until he reached the Palace. There he alighted under an olive tree, and, fastening his horse to one of the branches, took off his helmet and unbuckled his breastplate. The people stared as they passed by, but nobody spoke to him.

Someone told the King that a strange man without a squire or even a man-at-arms was sitting before the Palace under an olive tree. The King's face grew dark as he heard their tale, for he loved to keep his gardens for his own pleasure. 'Sanson,' he called to one of his guards, 'go and find out who this stranger is and whence he comes, but beware of bringing him hither.'

Sanson hastened to do his errand, and William answered: 'My name is one that is known to France. I am William Short Nose, and I come from Orange. My body is worn out with much riding; I pray you hold my horse until I have spoken to King Louis.'

'Noble Count,' replied Sanson, 'let me first return to

the King and tell him who you are. And be not angry, I beseech you, for such are my orders.'

'Be quick, then, my friend,' said William, 'and do not neglect to tell the King that I am in great distress. This is the time to show his love for me; and if he truly does love me, let him come to meet me with the great Lords of his Court. If he does not come, I have no other hope.'

'I will tell him what you say,' said Sanson, 'and if it rests with me you shall be content.'

Then Sanson went back to the King. 'It is William, the famous William!' he said, 'and he wishes you to go out to meet him.'

'Never!' answered Louis. 'Will he always be a thorn in my side? Woe be to him who rejoices at his coming.'

So the King sat still, and on the steps of the Palace there gathered Knights and Nobles in goodly numbers, and hardly one but wore a mantle of ermine or marten, a helmet set with precious stones, a sword or a shield which had been given him by William himself. But now they were rich and he was poor, so they mocked at him.

'My lords,' said William, 'you do ill to treat me so. I have loved you all, and you bear the tokens of my love about you at this moment. If I can give you no more gifts, it is because I have lost all I have in the world at the Aliscans. My men are dead, and my nephews are prisoners in the hands of the Saracens. It is the Lady Gibourc who bade me come here, and it is she who asks for help through me. Have pity on us, and help us.' But without a word, they rose up and went into the Palace, and William knew what their love was worth.

The young men told Louis of the words that the Count had spoken, and the King rose and leaned out of the window. 'Sir William,' said he, 'go to the inn, and let them bathe your horse. You seem in a sorry plight, without a groom or esquire to help you.'

William heard and vowed vengeance. But if the King and the courtiers had no hearts, in his need a friend came to him, Guimard, a citizen of Laon, who took the Count home and offered him rich food. But because of his vow to the Lady Gibourc, he would only eat coarse bread, and drink water from the spring; and as soon as it was light he rose up from his bed of fresh hay, and dressed himself. 'Where are you going?' asked his host.

'To the Palace, to entreat the aid of the King, and woe be to him who tries to stop me.'

'May God protect you, Sir,' answered Guimard. 'To-day the King crowns Blanchefleur, your sister, who no doubt loves you well. And he gives her the Vermandois for her dower, the richest land in all fair France, but a land that is never at peace.'

'Well,' said William, 'I will be present at the ceremony. Indeed they cannot do without me, for all France is under my care, and it is my right to bear her standard in battle. And let them beware how they move me to wrath, lest I depose the King of France and tear the crown from his head.'

The Count placed a breastplate under his jerkin and hid his sword under his cloak. The gates of the Palace opened before him and he entered the vaulted hall. It was filled with the greatest Nobles in the land, and ladies with rich garments of silk and gold. Lords and ladies both knew him, but not one gave him welcome — not even his sister, the Queen. His fingers played with his sword, and he had much ado not to use it. But while his wrath was yet kindling the heralds announced that his father Aimeri had come.

The Lord of Narbonne stepped on to the grass with Ermengarde, his noble Countess, his four sons, and many servants. King Louis and the Queen hastened to meet them, and amid cries of joy they mounted the steps into the hall. Aimeri sat beside the King of Saint-Denis, and

the Countess was seated next the Queen, while the Knights placed themselves on the floor of the hall. And William sat also, but alone and apart, nursing his anger.

At last he rose, and, advancing to the middle of the floor, he said with a loud voice: 'Heaven protect my mother, my father, my brothers, and my friends; but may His curse alight on my sister and on the King, who have no hearts, and have left me to be the butt of all the mockers of the Court. By all the Saints! were not my father sitting next him, this sword should ere now have cloven his skull.' The King listened, pale with fright, and the Queen wished herself at Paris or at Senlis. The rest whispered to each other, 'William is angry, something will happen!'

When Ermengarde and Aimeri saw their son standing before them great joy filled their souls. They left their seats and flung themselves on his neck, and William's brother also ran to greet him. The Count told them how he had been vanquished at the Aliscans, how Vivian had been killed, and he himself had fled to Orange, and of the distress in which he had left Gibourc. 'It was at her bidding I came here to ask aid from Louis, the base King, but from the way he has treated me I see plainly that he has no heart. By St. Peter! he shall repent before I go, and my sister also.'

The King heard and again waxed cold with fear; the Nobles heard and whispered low, 'Who is strong enough to compass this matter? No man, be he the bravest in France ever went to his help and came back to tell the tale. Let him abandon Orange, and let the King give him instead the Vermandois.'

It was the Lady Ermengarde who broke the silence. 'O God,' she cried, 'to think that the Franks should be such cowards! And you, Sir Aimeri, has your courage failed you also? Have no fear, fair son William, I have still left gold that would fill thirty chariots, and I will

give it to those who enrol themselves under your banner. I myself will don breastplate and shield, and will fight in the front rank of your army.'

Aimeri smiled and sighed as he listened to her words, and his son shed tears.

William answered nothing, but remained standing in the middle of the hall, his eyes fixed on his sister sitting on her throne, with a small golden crown upon her head, and on her husband King Louis.

'This, then, O King, is the reward of all I have done! When Charlemagne your father died, and all the Barons of the Empire met at Paris, you would have lost your crown if I had not forced them to place it upon your head.'

'That is true,' answered the King, 'and in remembrance of your services I will to-day bestow on you a fief.'

'Yes,' cried Blanchefleur, 'and no doubt will deprive me of one. A nice agreement, truly! Woe to him who dares carry it out.'

'Be silent, woman without shame!' said William. 'Every word you speak proclaims the depth of your baseness! You pass your days wrapped in rich clothing, eating costly food, and drinking rare wines, and little you care that we endure heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and suffer wounds and death so that your life may be easy.' Then he bounded forwards and tore off the crown, and, drawing his sword, would have cut off her head had not Ermengarde wrenched the weapon from his hands. Before he could seize it again the Queen darted away and took refuge in her chamber, where she fell fainting on the floor.

It was her daughter Alix, the fair and the wise, who raised her up and brought her back to consciousness; then heard with shame the tale she had to tell. 'How could you speak so to my uncle, the best man that ever wore a sword?' asked Alix. 'It was he who made you

Queen of France, and the words that you uttered must have been taught you by devils.'

'Yes, my daughter, you say truth,' answered the Queen, 'I have done ill, and if it rests with me I will make peace with my brother'; and she wept over her wicked speech, while Alix, red and white as the roses in May, went down into the hall, where the Franks were still whispering together, and calling curses on the head of William.

They all rose as the maiden entered; Aimeri, her grandfather, took her in his arms, and her four uncles kissed her cheek. Her presence seemed to calm the anger and trouble which before had reigned throughout the hall, and Ermengarde flung herself at William's feet and besought his pardon for the Queen. William raised his mother from her knees, but his anger was not soothed. 'I have no love for the King,' he said, 'and before night I will break his pride,' and he stood where he had been always standing, his face red with wrath, leaning on his naked sword. Not a sound was heard, and the eyes of all were fixed breathlessly upon William. Then in her turn Alix stepped forward and knelt at his feet. 'Punish me in my mother's place,' said she, 'and cut off my head if you will, or send me into exile, but let there be peace, I pray you, between you and my father and mother. Her ill words towards you did not come from her heart, but were put into her mouth by devils.'

At the voice of Alix William's wrath melted, but at first he would promise nothing. 'Fair son William,' said Ermengarde again, 'be content. The King will do what you desire, and will aid you to the uttermost.'

'Yes, I will aid you,' answered the King.

So peace was made, the Queen was fetched, and they all sat down to a great feast.

In this manner the pride of the King was broken.

But when one man is shifty and another is hasty wrath is not apt to slumber long, and treaties of peace

The Lady Alix stays the wrath of William-Shortnose

are easier made than kept. When the feast was over William pressed King Louis to prepare an army at once, so that no time might be lost in giving battle to the Infidels, but the King would bind himself to nothing. 'We will speak of it again,' said he; 'I will tell you to-morrow whether I will go or not.'

At this answer William grew red with rage, and holding out a wand he said to the King: 'I give you back your fief. I will take nothing from you, and henceforth will neither be your friend nor your vassal.'

'Keep your fief,' said Ernaut to his brother, 'and leave the King to do as he will. I will help you and my brothers also, and between us twenty thousand men shall march to the Aliscans, and deal death to any Infidels we shall find there.'

'You speak weak words,' cried Aimeri; 'he is Seneschal of France, and also her Standard Bearer; he has a right to our help, and if that fails a right to vengeance.' And Alix approved of his saying, and the Queen likewise.

The King saw that none was on his side and from fear of Aimeri and of his sons he dared refuse no longer. 'Count William, for love of you I will call together my army, and a hundred thousand men shall obey your commands. But I myself will not go with you, for my kingdom needs me badly.'

'Remain, Sire,' answered William, 'I myself will lead the host.' And the King sent out his messengers, and soon a vast army was gathered under the walls of Laon.

It was on one of these days when the Count stood in the great hall that there entered from the kitchen a young man whom he had never seen before. The youth, whose name was Rainouart, was tall; strong as a wild boar, and swift as a deer. The scullions and grooms had played off jests upon him during the night, but had since repented them sorely, for he had caught the leaders up in his arms and broken their heads against the walls. The

rest, eager to avenge their comrades' death, prepared to overcome him with numbers, and in spite of his strength it might have gone ill with Rainouart had not Aimeri de Narbonne, hearing the noise, forbade more brawling.

Count William was told of the unseemly scuffle, and asked the King who and what the young man was who could keep at bay so many of his fellows. 'I bought him once at sea,' said Louis, 'and paid a hundred marks for him. They pretend that he is the son of a Saracen, but he will never reveal the name of his father. Not knowing what to do with him, I sent him to the kitchen.'

'Give him to me, King Louis,' said William, smiling, 'I promise you he shall have plenty to eat.'

'Willingly,' answered the King.

Far off in the kitchen Rainouart knew nothing of what was passing between the King and the Count, and his soul chafed at the sound of the horses' hoofs, and at the scraps of talk he heard let fall by the Knights, who were seeing to the burnishing of their armour before they started to fight the Unbelievers. 'To think,' he said to himself, 'that I, who am of right King of Spain, should be loitering here, heaping logs on the fire and skimming the pot. But let King Louis look to himself! Before a year is past I will snatch the crown from his head.'

When the army had finished its preparations and was ready to march he made up his mind what to do, and it was thus that he sought out William in the great hall. 'Noble Count, let me come with you, I implore you. I can help to look after the horses and cook the food, and if at any time blows are needed I can strike as well as any man.'

'Good fellow,' answered William, who wished to try what stuff he was made of, 'you dream idle dreams. How could you, who have passed your days in the warmth of the kitchen, sleeping on the hearth when you were not busy turning the spit—how could you bear all

ALIX KISSES RAINOVART

the fatigue of war, the long fasts, and the longer watches? Before a month had passed you would be dead by the roadside!'

'Put me to the proof,' said he, 'and if you will not have me I will go alone to the Aliscans, and fight barefoot. My only weapon will be an iron-bound staff, and I promise you it shall kill as many Saracens as the best sword among you all.'

'Come then,' answered the Count.

The next morning the army set forth, and Alix and the Queen Blanchefleur watched them go from the steps of the Palace. When Alix saw Rainouart stepping proudly along with his heavy staff on his shoulder her heart stirred, and she said to her mother, 'See, what a goodly young man! In the whole army there is not one like him! Let me bid him farewell, for nevermore shall I see his match.'

'Peace! my daughter,' answered the Queen, 'I hope indeed that he may never more return to Laon.' But Alix took no heed of her mother's words, but signed to Rainouart to draw near. Then Alix put her arms round his neck, and said, 'Brother, you have been a long time at Court, and now you are going to fight under my uncle's banner. If ever I have given you pain, I ask your pardon.' After that she kissed him, and bade him go.

At Orleans William took leave of his father Count Aimeri and his mother Ermengarde, the noble Countess, who returned to their home at Narbonne, and also of his brothers, who promised to return to meet William under the walls of Orange, which they did faithfully. He himself led his army by a different road, and pressed on quickly till he came in sight of his native city. But little of it could he see, for a great smoke covered all the land, rising up from the burning towers which the Saracens had that morning set on fire. Enter the city they could not, for Gibourc and her ladies held it firm, and, armed with helmets and breastplates, flung stones upon the

head of any Saracen who appeared on the walls. So the Unbelievers fell back and took the way to the Aliscans, there to build as quickly as they might an engine to bring up against the tower and overthrow it.

When William beheld the smoke, and whence it came, he cried, 'Orange is burning! Holy Saint Mary, Gibourc is carried captive! To arms! To arms!' And he spurred his horse to Orange, Rainouart running by his side. From her tower Gibourc saw through the smoke a thousand banners waving and the sparkle of armour, and heard the sound of the horses' hoofs, and it seemed to her that the Infidels were drawing near anew. 'Oh, William!' cried she, 'have you really forgotten me? Noble Count, you linger overlong! Nevermore shall I look upon your face.' And so saying she fell fainting on the floor.

But something stirred the pulses of Gibourc, and she soon sat up again, and there at the gate was William the Count, with Rainouart behind him. 'Fear nothing, noble lady,' said he, 'it is the army of France that I have brought with me. Open, and welcome to us!' The news seemed so good to Gibourc that she could not believe it, and she bade the Count unlace his helmet, so that she might indeed be sure that it was he. William did her bidding, then like an arrow she ran to the gate and let down the drawbridge, and William stepped across it and embraced her tenderly. Then he ordered his army to take up its quarters in the city.

Gibourc's eyes had fallen upon Rainouart, who had passed her on his way to the kitchen, where he meant to leave his stout wooden staff. 'Tell me,' said she to the Count, 'who is that young man who bears lightly on his shoulder that huge piece of wood which would weigh down a horse? He is handsome and well made. Where did you find him?'

'Lady,' answered William, 'he was given me by the King.'

'My Lord,' said Gibourc, 'be sure you see that he is honourably treated. He looks to me to be of high birth. Has he been baptized?'

'No, Madam, he is not a Christian. He was brought from Spain as a child, and kept for seven years in the kitchen. But take him, I pray you, under your protection, and do with him as you will.'

The Count was hungry, and while waiting for dinner to be served he stood with Gibourc at the windows which looked out beyond the city. An army was drawing near; thousands of men, well mounted and freshly equipped. 'Gibourc!' cried the Count, joyfully, 'here is my brother Ernaut de Gironde, with his vassals. Now all the Saracens in the world shall not prevent Bertrand from being delivered to-morrow.'

'No,' answered Gibourc, 'nor Vivian from being avenged.'

On all sides warriors began to arrive, led by the fathers of those who had been taken prisoners with Bertrand, and with them came Aimeri de Narbonne and the brothers of William. Glad was the heart of the Count as he bade them welcome to his Palace of Gloriette, and ordered a feast to be made ready, and showed each Knight where he should sit.

It was late before the supper was served, but when every man had his trencher filled Rainouart entered the hall, armed with his staff, and stood leaning against a pillar, watching the noble company. 'Sir,' said Aimeri, the man whom the Saracens most dreaded, 'who is it that I see standing there holding a piece of wood that five peasants could hardly lift? Does he mean to murder us?'

'That youth,' replied William, 'is a gift to me from King Louis. None living is as strong as he.' Then Aimeri called Rainouart, and bade him sit at his side, and eat and drink as he would. 'Noble Count,' said Aimeri, 'such men grow not on every bush. Keep him

and cherish him, and bring him with you to the Aliscans. For with his staff he will slay many Pagans.'

'Yes,' answered Rainouart, 'wherever I appear the Pagans will fall dead at the sight of me.' Aimeri and William laughed to hear him, but ere four days were past they had learnt what he was worth.

Rainouart went back to the kitchen and slept soundly, but as he had drunk much wine the cooks and scullions thought to play jokes upon him, and lighted some wooden shavings with which to burn his moustache. At the first touch of the flame Rainouart leapt to his feet, seized the head cook by his legs, flung him on to the blazing fire, and turned for another victim, but they had all fled.

At daybreak they went to William to complain of the death of their chief, and to pray for vengeance on his murderer. If the Count would not forbid him the kitchen, not a morsel of food would they cook. But William only laughed at their threats, and said, 'Beware henceforth how you meddle with Rainouart, or it will cost you dear. Did I not forbid anyone to mock at him, and do you dare to disobey my orders? Lady Gibourc, take Rainouart to your chamber, and keep him beside you.'

So the Countess went to the kitchen to look for Rainouart and found him sitting on a bench, his head leaning against his staff. She sat down by him and said graciously, 'Brother, come with me. I will give you my ermine pelisse and a mantle of marten, and we will have some talk together.'

'Willingly,' answered Rainouart, 'the more as I can hardly keep my hands off these low-born scoundrels.'

He followed Gibourc to her room, and then she questioned him about himself and the days of his childhood.

'Have you brothers or sisters?' asked she.

'Yes,' he answered, 'beyond the sea I have a brother who is a King. and a sister who is more beautiful than a

THE LADY GIBOURC. WITH RAINOUART IN THE KITCHEN

fairy,' and as he spoke he bent his head. Something in her heart told Gibourc that this might be her brother, but she only asked again, 'Where do you come from?'

'Lady,' he replied, 'I will answer that question the day I come back from the battle which William shall have won, thanks to my aid.'

Gibourc kept silence, but she opened a chest and drew from it a white breastplate that had belonged to the Emir Tournefer, her uncle, which was so finely wrought that no sword could pierce it. Likewise a helmet of steel and a sword that could cut through iron more easily than a scythe cuts grass. 'My friend,' she said, 'buckle this sword to your left side. It may be useful to you.' Rainouart took the sword and drew it from its scabbard, but it seemed so light that he threw it down again. 'Lady,' he cried, 'what good can such a plaything do me? But with my staff between my hands there is not a Pagan that can stand up against me, and if one escapes then let Count William drive me from his door.'

At this Gibourc felt sure this was indeed her brother, but she did not yet like to ask him more questions, and in her joy and wonder she began to weep. 'Lady Countess,' said Rainouart, 'do not weep. As long as my staff is whole William shall be safe.'

'My friend, may Heaven protect you,' she answered, 'but a man without armour is soon cut down; one blow will be his death. So take these things and wear them in battle,' and she laced on the helmet, and buckled the breastplate, and fastened the sword on his thigh. 'If your staff breaks, it may serve you,' said she.

Rainouart's heart was proud indeed when the armour was girded on him, and he sat himself down well pleased at William's table. The Knights vied with each other in pouring him out bumpers of wine, and after dinner every man tried to lift his iron-bound staff, but none could raise it from the ground, except William himself, who by putting forth all his strength lifted it the height of a foot.

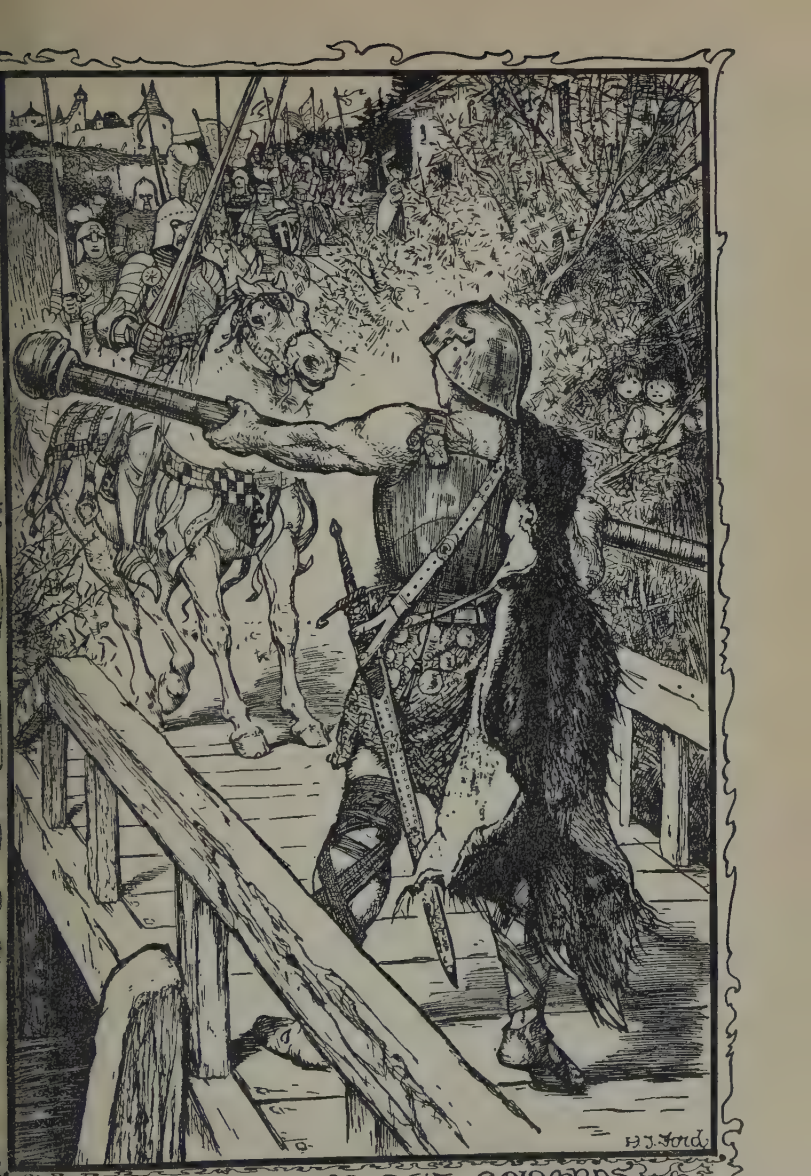
'Let me aid you,' said Rainouart, and catching it up he whirled it round his head, throwing it lightly from hand to hand. 'We are wasting time,' he went on. 'I fear lest the Pagans should fly before we come up with them. If I only have the chance to make them feel the weight of my staff, I shall soon sweep the battlefield clean.' And William embraced him for these words, and ordered the trumpets to be sounded and the army to march.

From her window Gibourc watched them go. She saw the Knights, each with his following, stream out into the plain, their banners floating on the wind, their helmets shining in the sun, their shields glittering with gold. She heard their horses neigh with delight, as they snuffed up the air, and she prayed God to bless all this noble host.

After two days' march they came within sight of the Aliscans, but for five miles round the country was covered by the Pagan army. William perceived that some of his men quailed at the number of the foe, so he turned and spoke to his soldiers. 'My good Lords,' he said, 'a fearful battle awaits us, and we must not give way an inch. If any man feels afraid, let him go back to his own land. This is no place for cowards.'

The cowards heard joyfully, and without shame took the road by which they had come. They spurred their horses and thought themselves safe, but they rejoiced too soon.

At the mouth of a bridge Rainouart met them, and he took them for Pagans who were flying for their lives. But when he saw that they were part of the Christian host he raised his staff and barred their passage. 'Where are you going?' asked he. 'To France, for rest,' answered the cowards; 'the Count has dismissed us, and when we reach our homes we shall bathe ourselves and have good cheer, and see to the rebuilding of our castles, which have fallen into ill-repair during the wars. With



RAINOUART STOPS THE COWARDS

William one has to bear pains without end, and at the last to die suffering. Come with us, if you are a wise man.'

'Ask someone else,' said Rainouart; 'Count William has given me the command of the army, and it is to him that I have to render account. Do you think I shall let you run away like hares? By Saint-Denis! not another step shall you stir!' And, swinging his staff round his head, he laid about him. Struck dumb with terror at the sight of their comrades falling rapidly round them they had no mind to go on, and cried with one voice, 'Sir Rainouart, we will return and fight with you in the Aliscans; you shall lead us whither you will.' So they turned their horses' heads and rode the way they had come, and Rainouart followed, keeping guard over them with his staff. When they reached the army he went straight to William, and begged that he might have the command of them. 'I will change them into a troop of lions,' said he.

Harsh words and gibes greeted the cowards, but Rainouart soon forced the mockers to silence. 'Leave my men alone!' he cried, 'or by the faith I owe to Gibourc I will make you. I am a King's son, and the time has come to show you what manner of man I am. I have idled long, but I will idle no longer. I am of the blood royal, and the saying is true that good blood cannot lie.'

'How well he speaks!' whispered the Franks to each other, for they dared not let their voices be heard.

Now the battle was to begin, for the two armies were drawn up in fighting array, and Rainouart took his place at the head of his cowards opposite the Saracens, from which race he sprang.

The charge was sounded, and the two armies met with a shock, and many a man fell from his horse and was trampled under foot. 'Narbonne! Narbonne!' shouted Aimeri, advancing within reach of a crossbow

shot, and he would have been slain had not his sons dashed to his rescue. Count William did miracles, and the Saracens were driven so far back that Rainouart feared that the battle would be ended before he had struck a blow.

Followed by his troop of cowards Rainouart made straight for the enemy, and before him they fell as corn before a sickle. 'Strike, soldiers,' shouted he; 'strike and avenge the noble Vivian; woe to the King Desramé if he crosses my path.' And a messenger came and said to Desramé, 'It is Rainouart with the iron staff, the strongest man in the world.'

Rainouart and his cowards pressed on and on, and the Saracens fell back, step by step, till they reached the sea, where their ships were anchored.

Then Rainouart drove his staff in the sand, and by its help swung himself on board a small vessel, which happened to be the very one in which the nephews of William were imprisoned. He laid about him right and left with his staff, till he had slain all the gaolers, and at last he came to a young man whose eyes were bandaged and his feet tied together. 'Who are you?' asked Rainouart.

'I am Bertrand of France, nephew of William Short Nose. Four months ago I was taken captive by the Pagans, and if, as I think, they carry me into Arabia, then may God have pity upon my soul, for it is all over with my body.'

'Sir Count,' answered Rainouart, 'for love of William I will deliver you.'

Bertrand was set free and his companions also. Seizing the weapons of the dead Saracens, they scrambled on shore, and, while fighting for their lives, looked about for their uncle, whom they knew at last by the sweep of his sword, which kept a clean space round him. More than once Rainouart swept back fresh foes that were pressing forwards till the tide of battle carried him away and

brought him opposite Desramé the King. 'Who are you?' asked Desramé, struck by his face, for there was nothing royal in his dress or his arms.

'I am Rainouart, vassal of William whom I love, and if you do hurt to him I will do hurt to you also.'

'Rainouart, I am your father,' cried Desramé, and he besought him to forswear Christianity and to become a follower of Mahomet; but Rainouart turned a deaf ear, and challenged him to continue the combat. Desramé was no match for his son, and was soon struck from his horse. 'Oh, wretch that I am,' said Rainouart to himself, 'I have slain my brothers and wounded my father—it is my staff which has done all this evil,' and he flung it far from him.

He would have been wiser to have kept it, for in a moment three giants surrounded him, and he had only his fists with which to beat them back. Suddenly his hand touched the sword buckled on him by Gibourc, which he had forgotten, and he drew it from its scabbard, and with three blows clove the heads of the giants in twain. Meanwhile King Desramé took refuge in the only ship that had not been sunk by the Christians, and spread its sails. 'Come back whenever you like, fair father,' called Rainouart after him.

The fight was over; the Saracens acknowledged that they were beaten, and the booty they had left behind them was immense. The army, wearied with the day's toil, lay down to sleep, but before midnight Rainouart was awake and trumpets called to arms. 'Vivian must be buried,' said he, 'and then the march to Orange will begin.'

Rainouart rode at the head, his sword drawn, prouder than a lion; and as he went along a poor peasant threw himself before him, asking for vengeance on some wretches who had torn up a field of beans which was all he had with which to feed his family. Rainouart ordered the robbers to be brought before him and had them executed.

Then he gave to the peasant their horses and their armour in payment of the ruined beans. 'Ah, it has turned out a good bargain for me,' said the peasant. 'Blessed be the hour when I sowed such a crop.'

William entered into his Palace, where a great feast was spread for the visitors, but one man only remained outside the walls, and that was Rainouart, of whom no one thought in the hour of triumph. His heart swelled with bitterness as he thought of the blows he had given, and the captives he had set free, and, weeping with anger, he turned his face towards the Aliscans. On the road some Knights met him, and asked him whither he was going, and why he looked so sad. Then his wrath and grief burst out, and he told how he mourned that ever he had slain a man in William's cause, and that he was now hastening to serve under the banner of Mahomet, and would shortly return with a hundred thousand men behind him, and would avenge himself on France and her King. Only towards Alix would he show any pity!

In vain the Knights tried to soften his heart, it was too sore to listen. So they rode fast to Orange and told the Count what Rainouart had said.

'I have done him grievous wrong,' answered William, and ordered twenty Knights to ride after him. But the Knights were received with threats and curses, and came back to Orange faster than they had left it, thinking that Rainouart was at their heels.

William smiled when he heard the tale of his messengers, and bade them bring his horse, and commanded that a hundred Knights should follow him, and prayed Gibourc to ride at his side. They found Rainouart entering a vessel whose sails were already spread, and all William's entreaties would have availed nothing had not Gibourc herself implored his forgiveness.

'I am your brother,' cried Rainouart, throwing himself on her neck; 'I may confess it now, and for you I

will pardon the Count's ingratitude and never more will I remind you of it.'

There was great joy in Orange when William rode through the gates with Rainouart beside him, and the next day the Count made him his Seneschal, and he was baptized. Then William sent his brothers on an embassy to the King in Paris, to beg that he would bestow the hand of Princess Alix on Rainouart, son of King Desramé and brother of Lady Gibourc. And when the embassy returned Alix returned with it, and the marriage took place with great splendour; but to the end of his life, whenever Rainouart felt cold, he warmed himself in the kitchen.

WAYLAND THE SMITH

WAYLAND THE SMITH

Far up to the north of Norway and Sweden, looking straight at the Pole, lies the country of Finmark. It is very cold and very bare, and for half the year very dark; but inside its stony mountains are rich stores of metals, and the strong, ugly men of the country spent their lives in digging out the ore and in working it. Like many people who dwell in mountains, they saw and heard strange things, which were unknown to the inhabitants of the lands to the south.

Now in Finmark there were three brothers whose names were Slagfid, Eigil, and Wayland, all much handsomer and cleverer than their neighbours. They had some money of their own, but this did not prevent them working as hard as anyone else; and as they were either very clever or very lucky, they were soon in a fair way to grow rich.

One day they went to a new part of the mountains which was yet untouched, and began to throw up the earth with their pick-axes; but instead of the iron they expected to see they found they had lighted upon a mine of gold. This discovery pleased them greatly and their blows became stronger and harder, for the gold was deep in the rock and it was not easy to get it out. At last a huge lump rolled out at their feet, and when they picked it up they saw three stones shining in it, one red and one blue and one green. They took it home to their mother, who began to weep bitterly at the sight of it. 'What

is the matter?' asked her sons, anxiously, for they knew things lay open to her which were hidden from others.

'Ah, my sons,' she said as soon as she could speak, 'you will have much happiness, but I shall be forced to part with you. Therefore I shed tears, for I hoped that only death would divide us! Green is the grass, blue is the sky, red are the roses, golden is the maiden. The Norns' (for so in that country they called the Fates) 'beckon you to a land where green fields lie under a blue sky, fields where golden-haired maidens lie among the flowers.'

Great was the joy of the three brothers when they heard the words of their mother; for they hated the looks of the women who dwelt about them, and longed for the tall stature and white skins of the maidens of the south.

Next morning they rose early and buckled on their swords and coats of mail, and fastened on their heads helmets that they had made the day before from the lump of gold. In the centre of Slagfid's helmet was the green stone, and in the centre of Eigil's was the blue stone, and in the centre of Wayland's was the red stone; and when they were ready they put their reindeer into their sledges, and set out over the snow.

When they reached the mountains where only yesterday they had been digging they saw by the light of the moon a host of little men running to meet them. They were dressed all in grey, except for their caps, which were red; they had red eyes, too, and black tongues, which never ceased chattering. These were the mountain elves, and when they came near they formed themselves into a fairy ring, and sang while they danced around it:

Will you leave us? Will you leave us?
Slagfid, Eigil, and Wayland, sons of a King.
Is not the emerald better than grass?
Is not the ruby better than roses?
Is not the sapphire better than the sky?
Why do you leave the mountains of Finmark?

The Three Women By the Stream

But Eigil was impatient and struck his reindeer, that willing beast which flies like the wind and needs not the touch of a whip. It bounded forward in surprise, and knocked down one of the elves that stood in its path. But the hands of his brothers laid hold of the reins, and stopped the reindeer, and sang again:

The Finlander's world, the Finlander's joy,
Lies under the earth;
Seek not without what we offer within,
Despise not the elves, small and dark though they be.
The best is within, do not seek it without:
The Finlander's world, the Finlander's joy,
Lies under the earth.

Slagfid struck his reindeer. It bounded forward and struck down an elf who stood in its road. Then his brothers stood in its path, and stopped the reindeer, and sang:

Because Slagfid struck his reindeer,
Because Eigil struck his reindeer,
Our hatred shall follow you.
A time of weal, a time of woe, a time of grief, a time of joy.
Because Wayland also forsook us,
Though he struck not the reindeer,
A time of weal, a time of woe, a time of grief, a time of joy.
Farewell, O Finlanders, sons of a King.

Their voices died away as they crossed a bright strip of moonlight which lay between them and the mountains and were seen no more.

The brothers thought no more about them or their words, but went swiftly on their way south, sleeping at night in their reindeer skins.

After many days they came to a lake full of fish, in a place which was called the Valley of Wolves, because of the number of wolves which hid there. But the Finlanders did not mind the wolves, and built a house close to the lake, and hunted bears, and caught fish through holes in the ice, till winter had passed away and spring

had come. Then one day they noticed that the sky was blue and the earth covered with flowers.

By-and-by they noticed something more, and that was that three maidens were sitting on the grass, spinning flax on the bank of a stream. Their eyes were blue, and their skins were white as the snow on the mountains, while instead of the mantles of swansdown they generally wore, golden hair covered their shoulders.

The hearts of the brothers beat as they looked on the maidens, who were such as they had often dreamed of, but had never seen; and as they drew near they found to their surprise that the maidens were dressed each in red, green, and blue garments, and the meadow was so thickly dotted with yellow flowers that it seemed as if it were a mass of solid gold.

'Hail, noble princes! Hail, Slagfid, Eigil, and Wayland,' sang the maidens.

> Swanvite, Alvilda, and Alruna are sent by the Norns,
> To bring joy to the princes of Finland.

Then the tongues of the young men were unloosed, and Slagfid married Swanvite, Eigil Alruna, and Wayland Alvilda.

For nine years they all lived on the shores of the lake, and no people in the world were as happy as these six: till one morning the three wives stood before their husbands and said with weeping eyes:

'Dear lords, the time has now come when we must bid you farewell, for we are not allowed to stay with you any longer. We are Norns — or, as some call us, Valkyrie. Nine years of joy are granted to us, but these are paid for by nine years during which we hover round the combatants on every field of battle. But bear your souls in patience, for on earth all things have an end, and in nine years we will return to be your wives as before.'

'But we shall be getting old then,' answered the

brothers, 'and you will have forgotten us. Stay now, we pray you, for we love you well.'

'*We* are not mortals to grow old,' said the Norns, 'and true love does not grow old either. Still, we do not wish you to fall sick with grieving, so we leave you these three keys, with which you may open the mountain, and busy yourselves by digging out the treasures it contains. By the time the nine years are over you will have become rich men, and men of renown.' So they laid down the keys and vanished.

For a long while the young men only left their houses to seek for food, so dreary had the Valley of Wolves become. At last Slagfid and Eigil could bear it no longer, and declared they would travel through the whole world till they found their wives; but Wayland, the youngest, determined to stay at home.

'You would do much better to remain where you are,' said he. 'You do not know in which direction to look for them, and it is useless to seek on earth for those who fly through the air. You will only lose yourselves, and starve, and when the nine years are ended who can tell where you may be?'

But his words fell on deaf ears; for Slagfid and Eigil merely filled their wallets with food and their horns with drink, and prepared to take leave of their brother. Wayland embraced them weeping, for he feared that he would never more see them, and once again he implored them to give up their quest. Slagfid and Eigil only shook their heads. 'We have no rest, night or day, without them,' they said, and they begged him to look after their property till they came back again.

Wayland saw that more words would be wasted, so he walked with them to the edge of the forest, where their ways would part. Then Slagfid said, 'Our fathers, when they went a journey, left behind them a token by which it might be known whether they were dead or alive, and I will do so also.' So he stamped heavily

on the soft ground, and added: 'As long as this foot-mark remains sharp and clear, I shall be safe. If it is filled with water, I shall be drowned; if with blood, I shall have fallen in battle. But if it is filled with earth, an illness will have killed me, and I shall lie under the ground.' Thus he did, and Eigil did likewise. Then they cut stout sticks to aid their journeys, and went their ways.

Wayland stood gazing after them as long as they were in sight, then he went sadly home.

Slagfid and Eigil walked steadily on through the day, and when evening came they reached a stream bordered with trees, where they took off their golden helmets and sat down to rest and eat. They had gone far that day and were tired, and drank somewhat heavily, so that they knew not what they did. 'If I lose my Swan-vite,' said Slagfid, 'I am undone. She is the fairest woman that sun ever looked on, or that man ever loved.'

'It is a lie,' answered Eigil. 'I know one lovelier still, and her name is Alruna. Odin does not love Freya so fondly as Eigil adores her.'

'It is no lie,' cried Slagfid, 'and may shame fall on him who slanders me.'

'And I,' answered Eigil, 'stand to what I have said, and declare that you are the liar.' At this they both drew their swords and fell fighting, till Slagfid struck Eigil's helmet so hard that the jewel flew into a thousand pieces, while Eigil himself fell backwards into the river.

Slagfid stood still, leaning on his sword and looking at the river into which his brother had fallen. Suddenly the trees behind him rustled, and a voice came out of them, saying, 'A time of weal, a time of woe, a time of tears, a time of death'; and though he could see nothing he remembered the mountain elves, and thought how true their prophecy had been. 'I have slain my brother,' he said to himself, 'my wife has forsaken me; I am miserable and alone. What shall I do? Go back to

SLAGFRID PURSUES THE WRAITH.

Wayland, or follow Eigil into the river? No. After all I may find my wife. The Norns do not always bring misfortune.'

As he spoke a light gleamed in the darkness of the night, and, looking up, Slagfid saw it was shed by a bright star which seemed to be drawing nearer to the earth, and the nearer it drew the more its shape seemed to change into a human figure. Then Slagfid knew that it was his wife Swanvite floating just over his head and encircled by a rim of clear green light. He could not speak for joy, but held out his arms to her. She beckoned to him to follow her, and, drawing out a lute, played on it, and Slagfid, flinging away his sword and coat of mail, began to climb the mountain. Half way up it seemed to him as if a hand from behind was pulling him back, and turning he fancied he beheld his mother and heard her say: 'My son, seek not after vain shadows, which yet may be your ruin. Strive not against the will of Odin, nor against the Norns.' The words caused Slagfid to pause for a moment, then the figure of Swanvite danced before him and beckoned to him again, and his mother was forgotten. There were rivers to swim, precipices to climb, chasms to leap, but he passed them all gladly till at last he noticed that the higher he got the less the figure seemed like Swanvite. He felt frightened and tried to turn back, but he could not. On he had to go, till just as he reached the top of the mountain the first rays of the sun appeared above the horizon, and he saw that, instead of Swanvite, he had followed a black elf.

He paused and looked over the green plain that lay thousands of feet below him, cool and inviting after the stony mountain up which he had come. 'A time of death,' whispered the black elf in his ear, and Slagfid flung himself over the precipice.

After his brothers had forsaken him Wayland went to bed lonely and sad; but the next morning he got up and

looked at the three keys that the Norns had left behind them. One was of copper, one was of iron, and one was of gold. Taking up the copper one, he walked to the mountain till he reached a flat wall of rock. He laid his key against it, and immediately the mountain flew open and showed a cave where everything was green. Green emeralds studded the rocks, green crystals hung from the ceiling or formed rows of pillars, even the copper which made the walls of the cave had a coating of green. Wayland broke off a huge projecting lump and left the cave, which instantly closed up so that not a crack remained to tell where the opening had been.

He carried the lump home, and put it into the fire till all the earth and stones which clung to it were burned away; and then he fashioned the pure copper into a helmet, and in the front of the helmet he set three of his largest emeralds.

This occupied some days, and when it was done he took the iron key, and went to another mountain, and laid the key against the rock, which flew open like the other one. But now the walls were of iron, which shone like blue steel, while sapphires glittered in the midst. From an opening above, the blue of the sky was reflected in the river beneath, and gentians and other blue flowers grew along the edge. Wayland gazed with wonder at all these things; then he broke off a piece of the iron, and carried it home with him. For many days after he busied himself in forging a sword that was so supple he could wind it round his body, and so sharp it could cut through a rock as if it had been a stick. In the handle and in the sheath he set some of the finest sapphires that he had brought away with him.

When all was finished he laid the sword aside, and returned to the mountain, with the golden key. This time the mountain parted, and he saw before him an archway, with a glimpse of the sea in the distance.

Before the entrance roses were lying, and inside the golden walls sparkled with rubies, while branches of red coral filled every crevice. Vines clambered about the pillars, and bore large bunches of red grapes.

Wayland stood long, looking at these marvels; then he plucked some of the grapes, broke off a lump of gold, and set out home again.

Next day he began to make himself a golden breast-plate, and in it he placed the jewels, and it was so bright that you could have seen the glitter a mile off.

After he had tried all the three keys, and found out the secrets of the mountain, Wayland felt dull, and as if he had nothing to do or to think about. So his mind went back to his brothers, and he wondered how they had fared all this time. The first thing he did was to go to the edge of the forest, and see if he could find the two footprints they had left. He soon arrived at the spot where they had taken farewell of each other, but a blue pool of water covered the trace of Eigil's foot. He turned to look at the impression made by Slagfid, but fresh green grass had sprung up over it, and on a birch-tree near it a bird had perched, which sang a mournful song.

Then Wayland knew that his brothers were dead, and he returned to his hut, grieving sore.

It was a long time before Wayland could bring himself to go out, so great was his sorrow; but at last he roused himself from his misery, and went to the mountain for more gold, meaning to work hard till the nine years should be over and he should get his wife back again. All day long he stood in his forge, smelting and hammering, till he had made hundreds of suits of armour and thousands of swords, and his fame travelled far, so that all men spoke of his industry. At last he grew tired of making armour, and hammered a number of gold rings, which he strung on strips of bark, and as he hammered

he thought of Alvilda his wife, and how the rings would gleam on her arms when once she came back again.

Now at this time Nidud the Little reigned over Sweden, and was hated by his people, for he was vain and cowardly and had many other bad qualities. It came to his ears that away in the forests lived a man who was very rich, and worked all day long in pure gold. The King was one of those people who could not bear to see anyone with things which he did not himself possess, and he began to make plans how to get hold of Wayland's wealth. At length he called together his chief counsellors, and said to them: 'I hear a man has come to my kingdom who is called Wayland, famous in many lands for his skill in sword-making. I have set men to inquire after him, and I have found that when first he came here he was poor and of no account, so he must have grown rich either by magic or else by violence. I command, therefore, that my stoutest men-at-arms should buckle on their iron breastplates and ride in the dead of night to Wayland's house, and seize his goods and his person.'

'King Nidud,' answered one of the courtiers, 'that you should take himself and his goods is well, but why send a troop of soldiers against one man? If he is no sorcerer, then a single one of your soldiers could take him captive; but if, on the other hand, he is a magician, then a whole army could do nothing with him against his will.' At this reply the King flew in a rage, and, snatching up a sword, ran it through his counsellor's body; then, turning to the rest, told them that they would suffer the same fate if they refused to submit to his will.

So the men-at-arms put on all their armour, and, mounting their horses, set forth at sunset to Wayland's house, King Nidud riding at their head. The door stood wide open, and they entered quietly, in deadly fear lest Wayland should attack them. But no one was inside, and they looked about, their eyes dazzled by the gold on the walls. The King gazed with wonder and delight at

the long string of golden rings, and, slipping the finest off a strip of bark, placed it on his finger. At that moment steps were heard in the outer court, and the King hastily desired his followers to hide themselves and not to stir till he signed to them to do so. In another moment Wayland stood in the doorway, carrying on his shoulders a bear which he had killed with his spear and was bringing home for supper. He was both tired and hungry, for he had been hunting all day; but he had first to skin the animal, and make a bright fire, before he could cut off some steaks and cook them at the end of the spear. Then he poured some mead into a cup and drank, as he always did, to the memory of his brothers. After that he spread out his bear's skin to dry in the wind, and this done he stretched himself out on his bed and went to sleep.

King Nidud waited till he thought all was safe, then crept forth with his men, who held heavy chains in their hands wherewith to chain the sleeping Wayland. But the task was harder than they expected, and he started up in wrath, asking why he should be treated so. 'If you want my gold, take it and release me. It is useless fighting against such odds.'

'I am no robber,' said the King, 'but Nidud your sovereign.'

'You do me much honour,' replied Wayland, 'but what have I done to be loaded with chains like this?'

'Wayland, I know you well,' said Nidud. 'Poor enough you were when you came from Finland, and now your jewels are finer and your drinking cups heavier than mine.'

'If I am indeed a thief,' answered Wayland, 'then you do well to load me with chains and lead me bound into your dungeons; but if not, I ask again, Why do you misuse me?'

'Riches do not come of themselves,' said Nidud, 'and if you are not a thief, then you must be a magician and must be watched.'

'If I were a magician,' answered Wayland, 'it would be easy for me to burst these bonds. I know not that ever I have wronged any man, but if he can prove it I will restore it to him tenfold. As to the gifts that may come from the gods, no man should grudge them to his fellow. Therefore release me, O King, and I will pay whatever ransom you may fix.'

But Nidud only bade his guards take him away, and Wayland, seeing that resistance availed nothing, went with them quietly. By the King's orders he was thrown into a dark hole fifteen fathoms under ground, and the soldiers then came and robbed the house of all its treasures, which they took to the Palace. The ring which Wayland had made for his wife, Nidud gave to his daughter Banvilda.

One day the Queen was playing the harp in her own room when the King came in to ask her counsel how best to deal with Wayland, as he did not think it wise to put him to death, for he hoped to make some profit out of his skill. 'His heart will beat high,' said the Queen, 'when he sees his good sword, and beholds his ring on Banvilda's finger. But cut asunder the sinews of his strength, so that he can never more escape from us, and keep him a prisoner on the island of Savarsted.'

The King was pleased with the Queen's words, and sent soldiers to carry Wayland to the tower on the island. The sinews of his leg were cut so that he could not swim away; but they gave him his boots, and the chests of gold they had found in his house. Here he was left, with nothing to do from morning till night but to make helmets and drinking cups and splendid armour for the King.

On this island Wayland remained for a whole year, chained to a stone and visited by no one but the King, who came from time to time to see how his prisoner was getting on with a suit of golden armour he had been ordered to make. The shield was also of gold, and on it Wayland

had beaten out a history of the gods and their great deeds. He was very miserable, for the hope of revenge which had kept him alive seemed as far off as ever in its fulfilment, and finding a sword he had lately forged lying close to his hand, he seized it, with the intent of putting an end to his wretched life. He had hardly stretched out his hand when a bird began to sing at the iron bars of his window, while the evening sun shone into his prison. 'I should like to see the world once more,' thought he, and, raising himself on the stone to which his chain was fastened, he was able to look at what lay beneath him. The sea washed the base of the rock on which the tower was built, and on a neck of land a little way off some children were playing before the door of a hut. Everything was bathed in red light from the glow of the setting sun.

Wayland stood quite still on the top of the stone, gazing at the scene with all his eyes, yet thinking of the land of his birth, which was so different. Then he looked again at the sea, which was already turning to steel, and in the distance he saw something moving on the waves. As it came nearer he discovered it was a young Nixie, or water sprite, and she held a lyre in her hand, and sang a song which blended with the murmur of the waves and the notes of the bird. And the song put new life and courage into his heart, for it told him that if he would endure and wait the pleasure of the gods, joy would be his one day.

The Nixie finished her song, and smiled up at Wayland at the window before turning and swimming over the waves till she dived beneath them. That same instant the bird flew away, and the moon was covered by a cloud. But Wayland's heart was cheered, and when he lay down to rest he slept quietly.

Some days later the King paid another visit, and suddenly espied the three keys which had been hidden in a corner with some of Wayland's tools. He at once asked Wayland what they were, and when he would not

tell him the King grew so angry that, seizing an axe, he declared that he would put his prisoner to death unless he confessed all he knew. There was no help for it, and Wayland had to say how he came by them and what wonders they wrought. The King heard him with delight and went away, taking the keys with him.

No time was lost in preparing for a journey to the mountains, and when he reached the spot described by Wayland he divided his followers into three parties, sending two to await him some distance off, and keeping the third to enter the mountain with himself, if the copper key did the wonders it had done before. So he gave it to one of the bravest of his men, and told him to lay it against the side of the mountain. The man obeyed, and instantly the mountain split from top to bottom. The King bade them enter, never doubting that rich spoils awaited him; but instead the men sank into a green marsh, which swallowed up many of them, while the rest were stung to death by the green serpents hanging from the roof. Those who, like the King, were near the entrance alone escaped.

As soon as he had recovered from the terror into which this adventure had thrown him he commanded that it should be kept very secret from the other two parties, and desired Storbiorn, his Chamberlain, to take the key of iron and the key of gold and deliver them to the leaders of the divisions he had left behind, with orders to try their fortune in different parts of the mountain. 'Give the keys to me, my lord King,' answered Storbiorn, 'and I shall know what to do with them. These magicians may do their worst, my heart will not beat one whit the faster; and I will see all that happens.' So he went and gave his message to the two divisions, and one stayed behind while Storbiorn went to the mountain with the other.

When they arrived the man who held the key laid it against the rock, which burst asunder, and half the men

entered at Storbiorn's command. Suddenly an icy blue stream poured upon them from the depths of the cavern and drowned most of them before they had time to fly. Only those behind escaped, and Storbiorn bade them go instantly to the King and tell him what had befallen them. Then he went to the third troop and marched with them to the rock, where he gave the golden key to one of the men, and ordered him to try it. The rock flew open at once, and Storbiorn told the men to enter, taking care, however, to keep behind himself. They obeyed and found themselves in a lovely golden cave, whose walls were lit up by thousands of precious stones of every hue. There was neither sight nor sound to frighten them, and even Storbiorn, when he saw the gold, forgot his prudence and his fears, and followed them in. In a moment a red fire burst out with a terrific noise, and clouds of smoke poured over them, so that they fell down choked into the flames. Only one man escaped, and he ran back as fast as he could to the King to tell him of the fate of his army.

All this time Wayland was working quietly in his island prison waiting for the day of his revenge. The suit of golden armour which the King had commanded kept him busy day and night, and, besides the wonderful shield with figures of the gods, he had wrought a coat of mail, a helmet, and armour for the thighs, such as never had been seen before. The King had invited all his great Nobles to meet him at the Palace when he returned from the mountain, that they might both see his armour and behold all the precious things he should bring with him from the caverns.

When Nidud reached his Palace the Queen and Banvilda, their daughter, came forth to meet him, and told him that the great hall was already full of guests, expecting the wonders he had brought. The King said little about his adventures, but went into the armoury to put on his armour in order to appear before his Nobles.

Piece by piece he fastened it, but he found the helmet so heavy that he could hardly bear it on his head. However, he did not look properly dressed without it, so he had to wear it, though it felt as if a whole mountain was pressing on his forehead. Then, buckling on the sword which Wayland had forged, he entered the hall, and seated himself on the throne. The Earls were struck dumb by his splendour, and thought at first that it was the god Thor himself, till they looked under the helmet and saw the ugly little man with the pale cowardly face. So they turned their eyes gladly on the Queen and Princess, both tall and beautiful and glittering with jewels, though inwardly they were not much better than the King.

A magnificent dinner made the Nobles feel more at ease, and they begged the King to tell them what man there was in Sweden so skilled in smith's work. Now Nidud had drunk deeply of mead, and longed to revenge himself on Wayland, whom he held to have caused the loss of his army; so he gave the key of the tower to one of his Earls, and bade him take two men and bring forth Wayland, adding that if the next time he visited the tower he should find a grain of gold missing, they should pay for it with their lives.

The three men got a boat, and rowed towards the tower, but on the way one who, like the King, had drunk too much mead, fell into the sea and was drowned. The other two reached the tower in safety, and finding Wayland, blackened with dust, busy at his forge, bade him come just as he was to the boat. With his hands bound they led him before the King, and Eyvind the Earl bowed low and said, 'We have done your desire, Sir King, and must now hasten back to look for Gullorm, who fell into the sea.'

'Leave him where he is,' replied Nidud; 'if he is not drowned by now he will never drown at all, but in token of your obedience to my orders I will give you each these golden chains.'

WAYLAND MOCKED BY THE QUEEN AND BANVILDA

The guests had not thought to see the man who had made such wonderful armour helpless and a cripple, and said so to the King. 'He was once handsome and stately enough,' answered Nidud, 'but I have bowed his stubborn head.' And the Queen and her daughter joined in saying, 'The maidens of Finland will hardly fancy a lover who cannot stand upright.' But Wayland stood as if he heard nothing till the King's son snatched a bone from the table and threw it at his head. Then his patience gave way, and, seizing the bone, he beat Nidud about the head with it till the straps of the helmet gave way and the helmet itself fell off. The guests all took his side, and said that, though a cripple, he was braver than many men whose legs were straight, and begged the King to allow him to go back to his prison without being teased further. But the King cried that Wayland had done mischief enough, and must now be punished, and told them the story of his visit to the mountain and the loss of his followers. 'It would be a small punishment to put him to death,' he said, 'for to so wretched a cripple death would be welcome. He may use the gold that is left, but henceforth he shall only have one eye to work with,' and the Princess came forward and carried out the cruel sentence herself. And Wayland bore it all, saying nothing, but praying the gods to grant him vengeance.

One night Wayland sat filled with grief and despair at his window, looking out over the sea, when he caught sight of two red lights, bobbing in his direction. He watched them curiously till they vanished beneath the tower; and soon the key of the outer door turned, and two men, whom he knew to be the King's sons, Gram and Skule, talked softly together. He kept very still, so that they might think he was asleep, and he heard Skule say: 'Let us first get the golden key from him, and when we have taken from the chest as much as we can carry we will put him to death, lest he should betray us to our father.' Then Wayland took a large sword which lay by

his side and hid it behind his seat, and he had scarcely done so when the princes entered the prison. 'Good greeting to you,' said Gram. 'Nidud our father has gone a journey into the country, and as he is so greedy of wealth that he will give us none, we have come here to get it for ourselves. Hand us the key and swear not to tell our father, or you shall die.'

'My good lords,' answered Wayland, 'your request is reasonable, and I am not so foolish as to refuse it. Here is the key, and in the name of the gods I will swear not to betray you.'

The brothers took the key, and opened the chest that stood by Wayland, which was still half full of gold. It dazzled their eyes, and they both stooped down so as to see it better. This was what Wayland had waited for, and, seizing his sword, he cut off their heads, which fell into the chest. He then shut down the lid, and dug a grave for the bodies in the floor of his dungeon. Afterwards he dried the skulls in the sun, and made them into two drinking cups wrought with gold. The eyes he set with precious stones and fashioned into armlets, while the teeth he filed till they were shaped like pearls, and strung like a necklace.

As soon as the King came back from his journey he paid a visit to Wayland, who produced the drinking cups, which he said were made of some curious shells washed up in a gale close to his window. The armlet he sent as a present to the Queen, and the bracelet to the Princess.

After some days had passed, and Gram and Skule had not returned, the King ordered a search to be made for them, and that very evening some sailors brought back their boat, which had drifted into the open sea. Their bodies, of course, were not to be found, and the King ordered a splendid funeral feast to be prepared to do them honour. On this occasion the new drinking cups were filled with mead, and, besides her necklace, Banvilda wore the ring which her father had taken long

The Merman warns Banvilda in vain.

ago from Wayland's house. As was the custom, the feast lasted long, and the dead Princes were forgotten by the guests, who drank deeply and grew merry. But at midnight their gaiety suddenly came to an end. The King was in the act of drinking from the cup of mead when he felt a violent pain in his head and let the vessel fall. The hues of the armlet became so strange and dreadful that the Queen's eyes suffered agony from looking at them, and she tore the armlets off her; while Banvilda was seized with such severe toothache that she could sit at table no longer. The guests at once took leave, but it was not till the sun rose that the pains of their hosts went away.

In the torture of toothache which she had endured during the night Banvilda had dashed her arm against the wall, and had broken some of the ornaments off the ring. She feared to tell her father, who would be sure to punish her, and was in despair how to get the ring mended when she caught sight of the island on which Wayland's tower stood. 'If I had not mocked at him he might have helped me now,' thought she. But no other way seemed to offer itself, and in the evening she loosened a boat and began to row to the tower. On the way she met an old merman with a long beard, floating on the waves, who warned her not to go on; but she paid no heed, and only rowed the faster.

She entered the tower by a false key, and, holding the ring out to Wayland, begged him to mend it as fast as possible, so that she might return before she was missed. Wayland answered her with courtesy, and promised to do his best, but said that she would have to blow the bellows to keep the forge fire alight. 'How comes it that these bellows are sprinkled with blood?' asked Banvilda.

'It is the blood of two young sea dogs,' answered Wayland; 'they troubled me for long, but I caught them when they least expected it. But blow, I pray you, the bellows harder, or I shall never be finished.'

Banvilda did as she was told, but soon grew tired and thirsty, and begged Wayland to give her something to drink. He mixed something sweet in a cup, which she swallowed hastily, and soon fell fast asleep on a bench. Then Wayland bound her hands, and placed her in the boat, after which he cut the rope that held it and let it drift out to sea. This done, he shut the door of the tower, and, taking a piece of gold, he engraved on it the history of all that had happened and put it where it must meet the King's eye when next he came. 'Now is my hour come,' he cried with joy, snatching his spear from the wall, but before he could throw himself on it he heard a distant song and the notes of a lute.

By this time the sun was high in the heavens, yet its brightness did not hinder Wayland from seeing a large star, which was floating towards him, and a brilliant rainbow spanned the sky. The flowers on the island unfolded themselves as the star drew near, and he could smell the smell of the roses on the shore. And now Wayland saw it was no star, but the golden chariot of Freya the goddess, whose blue mantle floated behind her till it was lost in the blue of the sky. On her left was a maiden dressed in garlands of fresh green leaves, and on her right was one clad in a garment of red. At the sight Wayland's heart beat high, for he thought of the lump of gold set with jewels which he and his brothers had found in the mountain so long ago. Fairies fluttered round them, mermaids rose from the depths of the sea to welcome them, and as Freya and her maidens entered the prison Wayland saw that she who wore the red garment was really Alvilda. 'Wayland,' said the goddess, 'your time of woe is past. You have suffered much and have avenged your wrongs, and now Odin has granted my prayer that Alvilda shall stay by you for the rest of your life, and when you die she shall carry you in her arms to the country of Walhalla, where you shall forge golden armour and fashion drinking horns for the gods.'

· THE CHARIOT OF FREYA ·

When Freya had spoken, she beckoned to the green maiden, who held in her hand a root and a knife. She cut pieces off the root and laid them on Wayland's feet, and on his eye, then, placing some leaves from her garland over the whole, she breathed gently on it. 'Eyr the physician has healed me,' cried Wayland, and the fairies took him in their arms and bore him across the waves to a bower in the forest, where he dreamed that Alvilda and Slagfid and Eigil were all bending over him.

When he woke Alvilda was indeed there, and he seemed to catch glimpses of his brothers amid the leaves of the trees. 'Arise, my husband,' said Alvilda, 'and go straight to the Court of Nidud. He still sleeps, and knows nothing. Throw this mantle on your shoulders, and they will take you for his servant.'

So Wayland went, and reached the royal chamber, and in his sleep the King trembled, though he knew not that Wayland was near. 'Awake,' cried Wayland, and the King woke, and asked who had dared to disturb him thus.

'Be not angry,' answered Wayland; 'had you slain Wayland long ago, the misfortune that I have to tell you of would never have happened.'

'Do not name his name,' said the King, 'since he sent me those drinking cups a burning fever has laid hold upon me.'

'They were not shells, as he told you,' answered Wayland, 'but the skulls of your two sons, Sir King. Their bodies you will find in Wayland's tower. As for your daughter she is tossing, bound, on the wild waves of the sea. But now I, Wayland, have come to give you your deathblow——' But before he could draw his sword fear had slain the King yet more quickly.

So Wayland went back to Alvilda, and they went into another country, where he became a famous smith, and he lived to a good old age; and when he died he was carried in Alvilda's arms to Walhalla, as Freya had promised.

THE STORY OF ROBIN HOOD

THE STORY OF ROBIN HOOD

MANY hundreds of years ago, when the Plantagenets were kings, England was so covered with woods that a squirrel was said to be able to hop from tree to tree from the Severn to the Humber. It must have been very different to look at from the country we travel through now; but still there were roads that ran from north to south and from east to west, for the use of those that wished to leave their homes, and at certain times of the year these roads were thronged with people. Pilgrims going to some holy shrine passed along, merchants taking their wares to Court, fat Abbots and Bishops ambling by on palfreys nearly as fat as themselves, to bear their part in the King's Council, and, more frequently still, a solitary Knight, seeking adventures.

Besides the broad roads there were small tracks and little green paths, and these led to clumps of low huts, where dwelt the peasants, charcoal-burners, and ploughmen, and here and there some larger clearing than usual told that the house of a yeoman was near. Now and then as you passed through the forest you might ride by a splendid abbey, and catch a glimpse of monks in long black or white gowns, fishing in the streams and rivers that abound in this part of England, or casting nets in the fish ponds which were in the midst of the abbey gardens. Or you might chance to see a castle with round turrets and high battlements, circled by strong walls, and protected by a moat full of water.

This was the sort of England into which the famous

Robin Hood was born. We do not know anything about him, who he was, or where he lived, or what evil deed he had done to put him beyond the King's grace. For he was an outlaw, and any man might kill him and never pay penalty for it. But, outlaw or not, the poor people loved him and looked on him as their friend, and many a stout fellow came to join him, and led a merry life in the greenwood, with moss and fern for bed, and for meat the King's deer, which it was death to slay. Peasants of all sorts, tillers of the land, yeomen, and some say Knights, went on their ways freely, for of them Robin took no toll; but lordly churchmen with money-bags well filled, or proud Bishops with their richly dressed followers, trembled as they drew near to Sherwood Forest—who was to know whether behind every tree there did not lurk Robin Hood or one of his men?

THE COMING OF LITTLE JOHN

One day Robin was walking alone in the wood, and reached a river which was spanned by a very narrow bridge, over which one man only could pass. In the midst stood a stranger, and Robin bade him go back and let him go over. 'I am no man of yours,' was all the answer Robin got, and in anger he drew his bow and fitted an arrow to it. 'Would you shoot a man who has no arms but a staff?' asked the stranger in scorn; and with shame Robin laid down his bow, and unbuckled an oaken stick at his side. 'We will fight till one of us falls into the water,' he said; and fight they did, till the stranger planted a blow so well that Robin rolled over into the river. 'You are a brave soul,' said he, when he had waded to land, and he blew a blast with his horn which brought fifty good fellows, clad in green, to the little bridge. 'Have you fallen into the river that your clothes are wet?' asked one; and Robin made answer, 'No, but this stranger, fighting on the bridge, got the better of me, and tumbled me into the stream.'

At this the foresters seized the stranger, and would have ducked him had not their leader bade them stop, and begged the stranger to stay with them and make one of themselves. 'Here is my hand,' replied the stranger, 'and my heart with it. My name, if you would know it, is John Little.'

'That must be altered,' cried Will Scarlett; 'we will call a feast, and henceforth, because he is full seven feet tall and round the waist at least an ell, he shall be called Little John.'

And thus it was done; but at the feast Little John, who always liked to know exactly what work he had to do, put some questions to Robin Hood. 'Before I join hands with you, tell me first what sort of life is this you lead? How am I to know whose goods I shall take, and whose I shall leave? Whom I shall beat, and whom I shall refrain from beating?'

And Robin answered: 'Look that you harm not any tiller of the ground, nor any yeoman of the greenwood — no, nor no Knight nor Squire, unless you have heard him ill spoken of. But if Bishops or Archbishops come your way, see that you spoil *them*, and mark that you always hold in your mind the High Sheriff of Nottingham.'

This being settled, Robin Hood declared Little John to be second in command to himself among the brotherhood of the forest, and the new outlaw never forgot to 'hold in his mind' the High Sheriff of Nottingham, who was the bitterest enemy the foresters had.

LITTLE JOHN'S FIRST ADVENTURE

Robin Hood, however, had no liking for a company of idle men about him, and he at once sent off Little John and Will Scarlett to the great road known as Watling Street, with orders to hide among the trees and wait till some adventure might come to them; and if they took captive Earl or Baron, Abbot or Knight, he was to be brought unharmed back to Robin Hood.

But all along Watling Street the road was bare; white and hard it lay in the sun, without the tiniest cloud of dust to show that a rich company might be coming: east and west the land lay still.

At length, just where a side path turned into the broad highway, there rode a Knight, and a sorrier man than he never sat a horse on summer day. One foot only was in the stirrup, the other hung carelessly by his side; his head was bowed, the reins dropped loose, and his horse went on as he would. At so sad a sight the hearts of the outlaws were filled with pity, and Little John fell on his knees and bade the Knight welcome in the name of his master.

'Who is your master?' asked the Knight.

'Robin Hood,' answered Little John.

'I have heard much good of him,' replied the Knight, 'and will go with you gladly.'

Then they all set off together, tears running down the Knight's cheeks as he rode, but he said nothing, neither was anything said to him. And in this wise they came to Robin Hood.

'Welcome, Sir Knight,' cried he, 'and thrice welcome,

for I waited to break my fast till you or some other had come to me.'

'God save you, good Robin,' answered the Knight, and after they had washed themselves in the stream they sat down to dine off bread and wine, with flesh of the King's deer, and swans and pheasants. 'Such a dinner have I not had for three weeks and more,' said the Knight. 'And if I ever come again this way, good Robin, I will give you as fine a dinner as you have given me.'

'I thank you,' replied Robin, 'my dinner is always welcome; still, I am none so greedy but I can wait for it. But before you go, pay me, I pray you, for the food which you have had. It was never the custom for a yeoman to pay for a Knight.'

'My bag is empty,' said the Knight, 'save for ten shillings only.'

'Go, Little John, and look in his wallet,' said Robin, 'and, Sir Knight, if in truth you have no more, not one penny will I take, nay, I will give you all that you shall need.'

So Little John spread out the Knight's mantle, and opened the bag, and therein lay ten shillings and naught besides.

'What tidings, Little John?' cried his master.

'Sir, the Knight speaks truly,' said Little John.

'Then fill a cup of the best wine and tell me, Sir Knight, whether it is your own ill doings which have brought you to this sorry pass.'

'For an hundred years my fathers have dwelt in the forest,' answered the Knight, 'and four hundred pounds might they spend yearly. But within two years misfortune has befallen me, and my wife and children also.'

'How did this evil come to pass?' asked Robin.

'Through my own folly,' answered the Knight, 'and because of my great love I bore my son, who would never be guided of my counsel, and slew, ere he was twenty years old, a Knight of Lancaster and his Squire. For their

deaths I had to pay a large sum, which I could not raise without giving my lands in pledge to the rich Abbot of St. Mary's. If I cannot bring him the money by a certain day they will be lost to me for ever.'

'What is the sum?' asked Robin. 'Tell me truly.'

'It is four hundred pounds,' said the Knight.

'And what will you do if you lose your lands?' asked Robin again.

'Hide myself over the sea,' said the Knight, 'and bid farewell to my friends and country. There is no better way open to me.'

At this tears fell from his eyes, and he turned him to depart. 'Good day, my friend,' he said to Robin, 'I cannot pay you what I should ——' But Robin held him fast. 'Where *are* your friends?' asked he.

'Sir, they have all forsaken me since I became poor, and they turn away their heads if we meet upon the road, though when I was rich they were ever in my castle.'

When Little John and Will Scarlett and the rest heard this they wept for very shame and fury and Robin bade them fill a cup of the best wine, and give it to the Knight.

'Have you no one who would stay surety for you?' said he.

'None,' answered the Knight, 'but only Our Lady, who has never yet failed to help me.'

'You speak well,' said Robin, 'and you, Little John, go to my treasure chest, and bring me thence four hundred pounds. And be sure you count it truly.'

So Little John went, and Will Scarlett, and they brought back the money.

'Sir,' said Little John, when Robin had counted it and found it no more nor no less, 'look at his clothes, how thin they are! You have stores of garments, green and scarlet, in your coffers — no merchant in England can boast the like. I will measure some out with my bow.' And thus he did.

'Master,' spoke Little John again, 'there is still something else. You must give him a horse, that he may go as beseems his quality to the Abbey.'

'Take the grey horse,' said Robin, 'and put a new saddle on it, and take likewise a good palfrey and a pair of boots, with gilt spurs on them. And as it were a shame for a Knight to ride by himself on this errand, I will lend you Little John as Squire — perchance he may stand you in yeoman's stead.'

'When shall we meet again?' asked the Knight.

'This day twelve months,' said Robin, 'under the greenwood tree.'

Then the Knight rode on his way, with Little John behind him, and as he went he thought of Robin Hood and his men, and blessed them for the goodness they had shown towards him.

'To-morrow,' he said to Little John, 'I must be at the Abbey of St. Mary, which is in the city of York, for if I am but so much as a day late my lands are lost for ever, and though I were to bring the money I should not be suffered to redeem them.'

Now the Abbot had been counting the days as well as the Knight, and the next morning he said to his monks: 'This day year there came a Knight and borrowed of me four hundred pounds, giving his lands in surety. And if he come not to pay his debt ere midnight tolls they will be ours for ever.'

'It is full early yet,' answered the Prior, 'he may still be coming.'

'He is far beyond the sea,' said the Abbot, 'and suffers from hunger and cold. How is he to get here?'

'It were a shame,' said the Prior, 'for you to take his lands. And you do him much wrong if you drive such a hard bargain.'

'He is dead or hanged,' spake a fat-headed monk who was the cellarer, 'and we shall have his four hundred

pounds to spend on our gardens and our wines,' and he went with the Abbot to attend the court of justice wherein the Knight's lands would be declared forfeited by the High Justiciar.

'If he come not this day,' cried the Abbot, rubbing his hands, 'if he come not this day, they will be ours.'

'He will not come yet,' said the Justiciar, but he knew not that the Knight was already at the outer gate, and Little John with him.

'Welcome, Sir Knight,' said the porter. 'The horse that you ride is the noblest that ever I saw. Let me lead them both to the stable, that they may have food and rest.'

'They shall not pass these gates,' answered the Knight, sternly, and he entered the hall alone, where the monks were sitting at meat, and knelt down and bowed to them.

'I have come back, my lord,' he said to the Abbot, who had just returned from the court. 'I have come back this day as I promised.'

'Have you brought my money?' was all the Abbot said.

'Not a penny,' answered the Knight, who wished to see how the Abbot would treat him.

'Then what do you here without it?' cried the Abbot in angry tones.

'I have come to pray you for a longer day,' answered the Knight, meekly.

'The day was fixed and cannot be gainsaid,' replied the Justiciar, but the Knight only begged that he would stand his friend and help him in his strait. 'I am with the Abbot,' was all the Justiciar would answer.

'Good Sir Abbot, be my friend,' prayed the Knight again, 'and give me one chance more to get the money and free my lands. I will serve you day and night till I have four hundred pounds to redeem them.'

But the Abbot only swore a great oath, and vowed

that the money must be paid that day or the lands be forfeited.

The Knight stood up straight and tall: 'It is well,' said he, 'to prove one's friends against the hour of need,' and he looked the Abbot full in the face, and the Abbot felt uneasy, he did not know why, and hated the Knight more than ever. 'Out of my hall, false Knight!' cried he, pretending to a courage which he did not feel. But the Knight stayed where he was, and answered him, 'You lie, Abbot. Never was I false, and that I have shown in jousts and in tourneys.'

'Give him two hundred pounds more,' said the Justiciar to the Abbot, 'and keep the lands yourself.'

'No, by Heaven!' answered the Knight, 'not if you offered me a thousand pounds would I do it! Neither Justiciar, Abbot, nor Monk shall be heir of mine.' Then he strode up to a table and emptied out four hundred pounds. 'Take your gold, Sir Abbot, which you lent to me a year agone. Had you but received me civilly, I would have paid you something more.

'Sir Abbot, and ye men of law,
Now have I kept my day!
Now shall I have my land again,
For aught that you may say.'

So he passed out of the hall singing merrily, leaving the Abbot staring silently after him, and rode back to his house in Verisdale, where his wife met him at the gate.

'Welcome, my lord,' said his lady,
'Sir, lost is all your good.'
'Be merry, dame,' said the Knight,
'And pray for Robin Hood.

But for his kindness, we had been beggars.'

After this the Knight dwelt at home, looking after his lands and saving his money carefully till the four hundred pounds lay ready for Robin Hood. Then he bought a hundred bows and a hundred arrows, and every arrow

was an ell long, and had a head of silver and peacock's feathers. And clothing himself in white and red, and with a hundred men in his train, he set off to Sherwood Forest.

On the way he passed an open space near a bridge where there was a wrestling, and the Knight stopped and looked, for he himself had taken many a prize in that sport. Here the prizes were such as to fill any man with envy; a fine horse, saddled and bridled, a great white bull, a pair of gloves, a ring of bright red gold, and a pipe of wine. There was not a yeoman present who did not hope to win one of them. But when the wrestling was over, the yeoman who had beaten them all was a man who kept apart from his fellows, and was said to think much of himself. Therefore the men grudged him his skill, and set upon him with blows, and would have killed him, had not the Knight, for love of Robin Hood, taken pity on him, while his followers fought with the crowd, and would not suffer them to touch the prizes a better man had won.

When the wrestling was finished the Knight rode on, and there under the greenwood tree, in the place appointed, he found Robin Hood and his merry men waiting for him, according to the tryst that they had fixed last year:

'God save thee, Robin Hood,
And all this company.'
'Welcome be thou, gentle Knight,
And right welcome to me.'

'Hast thou thy land again?' said Robin,
'Truth then tell thou me.'
'Yea, for God,' said the Knight,
'And that thank I God and thee.'

'Have here four hundred pounds,' said the Knight,
'The which you lent to me;
And here are also twenty marks
For your courtesie.'

But Robin would not take the money. A miracle had happened, he said, and Our Lady had paid it to him, and shame would it be for him to take it twice over. Then he noticed for the first time the bows and arrows which the Knight had brought, and asked what they were. 'A poor present to you,' answered the Knight, and Robin, who would not be outdone, sent Little John once more to his treasury, and bade him bring forth four hundred pounds, which was given to the Knight. After that they parted, in much love, and Robin prayed the Knight if he were in any strait 'to let him know at the greenwood tree, and while there was any gold there he should have it.'

HOW LITTLE JOHN BECAME THE SHERIFF'S SERVANT

Meanwhile the High Sheriff of Nottingham proclaimed a great shooting-match in a broad open space, and Little John was minded to try his skill with the rest. He rode through the forest, whistling gaily to himself, for well he knew that not one of Robin Hood's men could send an arrow as straight as he, and he felt little fear of anyone else. When he reached the trysting place he found a large company assembled, the Sheriff with them, and the rules of the match were read out: where they were to stand, how far the mark was to be, and how that three tries should be given to every man.

Some of the shooters shot near the mark, some of them even touched it, but none but Little John split the slender wand of willow with every arrow that flew from his bow. And at this sight the Sheriff of Nottingham swore a great oath that Little John was the best archer that ever he had seen, and asked him who he was and where he was born, and vowed that if he would enter his service he would give twenty marks a year to so good a bowman.

Little John, who did not wish to confess that he was one of Robin Hood's men and an outlaw, said his name was Reynold Greenleaf, and that he was in the service of a Knight, whose leave he must get before he became the servant of any man. This was given heartily by the Knight, and Little John bound himself to the Sheriff for the space of twelve months, and was given a good white horse to ride on whenever he went abroad. But for all that

he did not like his bargain, and made up his mind to do the Sheriff, who was hated of the outlaws, all the mischief he could.

His chance came on a Wednesday when the Sheriff always went hunting and Little John lay in bed till noon, when he grew hungry. Then he got up, and told the steward that he wanted some dinner. The steward answered he should have nothing till the Sheriff came home, so Little John grumbled and left him, and sought out the butler. Here he was no more successful than before; the butler just went to the buttery door and locked it, and told Little John that he would have to make himself happy till his lord returned.

Rude words mattered nothing to Little John, who was not accustomed to be baulked by trifles, so he gave a mighty kick which burst open the door, and then ate and drank as much as he would, and when he had finished all there was in the buttery, he went down into the kitchen.

Now the Sheriff's cook was a strong man and a bold one, and had no mind to let another man play the king in his kitchen; so he gave Little John three smart blows, which were returned heartily. 'Thou art a brave man and hardy,' said Little John, 'and a good fighter withal. I have a sword, take you another, and let us see which is the better man of us twain.'

The cook did as he was bid, and for two hours they fought, neither of them harming the other. 'Fellow,' said Little John at last, 'you are one of the best swordsmen that I ever saw — and if you could shoot as well with the bow I would take you back to the merry greenwood, and Robin Hood would give you twenty marks a year and two changes of clothing.'

'Put up your sword,' said the cook, 'and I will go with you. But first we will have some food in my kitchen, and carry off a little of the gold that is in the Sheriff's treasure house.'

They ate and drank till they wanted no more, then they broke the locks of the treasure house, and took of the silver as much as they could carry, three hundred pounds and more, and departed unseen by anyone to Robin in the forest.

'Welcome! Welcome!' cried Robin when he saw them, 'welcome, too, to the fair yeoman you bring with you. What tidings from Nottingham, Little John?'

'The proud Sheriff greets you, and sends you by my hand his cook and his silver vessels, and three hundred pounds and three also.'

Robin shook his head, for he knew better than to believe Little John's tale. 'It was never by his good will that you brought such treasure to me,' he answered, and Little John, fearing that he might be ordered to take it back again, slipped away into the forest to carry out a plan that had just come into his head.

He ran straight on for five miles, till he came up with the Sheriff, who was still hunting, and flung himself on his knees before him.

'Reynold Greenleaf,' cried the Sheriff, 'what are you doing here, and where have you been?'

'I have been in the forest, where I saw a fair hart of a green colour, and sevenscore deer feeding hard by.'

'That sight would I see too,' said the Sheriff.

'Then follow me,' answered Little John, and he ran back the way he came, the Sheriff following on horseback, till they turned a corner of the forest, and found themselves in Robin Hood's presence. 'Sir, here is the master-hart,' said Little John.

Still stood the proud Sheriff,
A sorry man was he,
'Woe be to you, Reynold Greenleaf,
Thou hast betrayed me!'

'It was not my fault,' answered Little John, 'but the fault of your servants, master. For they would not give me my dinner,' and he went away to see to the supper.

It was spread under the greenwood tree, and they sat down to it, hungry men all. But when the Sheriff saw himself served from his own vessels, his appetite went from him.

'Take heart, man,' said Robin Hood, 'and think not we will poison you. For charity's sake, and for the love of Little John, your life shall be granted you. Only for twelve months you shall dwell with me, and learn what it is to be an outlaw.'

To the Sheriff this punishment was worse to bear than the loss of gold or silver dishes, and earnestly he begged Robin Hood to set him free, vowing he would prove himself the best friend that ever the foresters had.

Neither Robin nor any of his men believed him, but he took a great oath that he would never seek to do them harm, and that if he found any of them in evil plight he would deliver them out of it. With that Robin let him go.

HOW ROBIN MET FRIAR TUCK

In many ways life in the forest was dull in the winter, and often the days passed slowly; but in summer, when the leaves grew green, and flowers and ferns covered all the woodland, Robin Hood and his men would come out of their warm resting places, like the rabbits and the squirrels, and would play too. Races they ran, to stretch their legs, or leaping matches were arranged, or they would shoot at a mark. Anything was pleasant, when the grass was soft once more under their feet.

'Who can kill a hart of grace five hundred paces off?' So said Robin to his men in the bright May time; and they went into the wood and tried their skill, and in the end it was Little John who brought down the 'hart of grace,' to the great joy of Robin Hood. 'I would ride my horse a hundred miles to find one who could match with thee,' he said to Little John, and Will Scarlett, who was perhaps rather jealous of this mighty deed, answered with a laugh, 'There lives a friar in Fountains Abbey who would beat both him and you.'

Now Robin Hood did not like to be told that any man could shoot better than himself or his foresters, so he swore lustily that he would neither eat nor drink till he had seen that friar. Leaving his men where they were, he put on a coat of mail and a steel cap, took his shield and sword, slung his bow over his shoulder, and filled his quiver with arrows. Thus armed, he set forth to Fountains Dale.

By the side of the river a friar was walking, armed

like Robin, but without a bow. At this sight Robin jumped from his horse, which he tied to a thorn, and called to the friar to carry him over the water or it would cost him his life.

The friar said nothing, but hoisted Robin on his broad back and marched into the river. Not a word was spoken till they reached the other side, when Robin leaped lightly down, and was going on his way when the friar stopped him. 'Not so fast, my fine fellow,' said he. 'It is my turn now, and you shall take me across the river, or woe will betide you.' So Robin carried him, and when they had reached the side from which they had started he set down the friar and jumped for the second time on his back, and bade him take him whence he had come. The friar strode into the stream with his burden, but as soon as they got to the middle he bent his head and Robin fell into the water. 'Now you can sink or swim as you like,' said the friar, as he stood and laughed.

Robin Hood swam to a bush of golden broom, and pulled himself out of the water, and while the friar was scrambling out Robin fitted an arrow to his bow and let fly at him. But the friar quickly held up his shield, and the arrow fell harmless.

'Shoot on, my fine fellow, shoot on all day if you like,' shouted the friar, and Robin shot till his arrows were gone, but always missed his mark. Then they took their swords, and at four of the afternoon they were still fighting.

By this time Robin's strength was wearing, and he felt he could not fight much more. 'A boon, a boon!' cried he. 'Let me but blow three blasts on my horn, and I will thank you on my bended knees for it.'

The friar told him to blow as many blasts as he liked, and in an instant the forest echoed with his horn; it was but a few minutes before 'half a hundred yeomen were racing over the lea.' The friar stared when he saw them; then, turning to Robin, he begged of him a boon also, and

leave being granted he gave three whistles, which were followed by the noise of a great crashing through the trees, as fifty great dogs bounded towards him.

'Here's a dog for each of your men,' said the friar, 'and I myself for you'; but the dogs did not listen to his words, for two of them rushed at Robin and tore his mantle of Lincoln green from off his back. His men were too busy defending themselves to take heed of their master's plight, for every arrow shot at a dog was caught and held in the creature's mouth.

Robin's men were not used to fight with dogs, and felt they were getting beaten. At last Little John bade the friar call off his dogs, and as he did not do so at once he let fly some arrows, which this time left half a dozen dead on the ground.

'Hold, hold, my good fellow,' said the friar, 'till your master and I can come to a bargain,' and when the bargain was made this was how it ran. That the friar was to forswear Fountains Abbey and join Robin Hood, and that he should be paid a golden noble every Sunday throughout the year, besides a change of clothes on each holy day.

This Friar had kept Fountains Dale
Seven long years or more,
There was neither Knight, nor Lord, nor Earl
Could make him yield before.

But now he became one of the most famous members of Robin Hood's men under the name of Friar Tuck.

HOW ROBIN HOOD AND LITTLE JOHN FELL OUT.

One Whitsunday morning, when the sun was shining and the birds singing, Robin Hood called to Little John to come with him into Nottingham to hear Mass. As was their custom, they took their bows, and on the way Little John proposed that they should shoot a match with a penny for a wager. Robin, who held that he himself shot better than any man living, laughed in scorn, and told Little John that he should have three tries to his master's one, which John without more ado accepted. But Robin soon repented both of his offer and his scorn, for Little John speedily won five shillings, whereat Robin became angry and smote Little John with his hand. Little John was not the man to bear being treated so, and he told Robin roundly that he would never more own him for master, and straightway turned back into the wood. At this Robin was ashamed of what he had done, but his pride would not suffer him to say so, and he continued his way to Nottingham, and entered the Church of St. Mary, not without secret fears, for the Sheriff of the town was ever his enemy. However, there he was, and there he meant to stay.

He knelt down before the great cross in the sight of all the people, but none knew him save one monk only, and he stole out of church and ran to the Sheriff, and bade him come quickly and take his foe. The Sheriff was not slow to do the monk's bidding, and,

calling his men to follow him, he marched to the church. The noise they made in entering caused Robin to look round. 'Alas, alas,' he said to himself, 'now miss I Little John.'

But he drew his two-handed sword and laid about him in such wise that twelve of the Sheriff's men lay dead before him. Then Robin found himself face to face with the Sheriff, and gave him a fierce blow; but his sword broke on the Sheriff's head, and he had shot away all his arrows. So the men closed round him, and bound his arms.

Ill news travels fast, and not many hours had passed before the foresters heard that their master was in prison. They wept and moaned and wrung their hands, and seemed to have gone suddenly mad, till Little John bade them pluck up their hearts and help him to deal with the monk.

The next morning he hid himself, and waited with a comrade, Much by name, till he saw the monk riding along the road, with a page behind him, carrying letters from the Sheriff to the King telling of Robin's capture.

'Whence come you?' asked Little John, going up to the monk, 'and can you give us tidings of a false outlaw named Robin Hood, who was taken prisoner yesterday? He robbed both me and my fellow of twenty marks, and glad should we be to hear of his undoing.'

'He robbed me, too,' said the monk, 'of a hundred pounds and more, but I have laid hands on him, and for that you may thank me.'

'I thank you so much that, with your leave, I and my friend will bear you company,' answered Little John; 'for in this forest are many wild men who own Robin Hood for leader, and you ride along this road at the peril of your life.'

They went on together, talking the while, when suddenly Little John seized the horse by the head and pulled down the monk by his hood.

'He was my master,' said Little John,
'That you have brought to bale,
'Never shall you come at the King
'For to tell him that tale.'

At these words the monk uttered loud cries, but Little John took no heed of him, and smote off his head, as Much had already smitten off that of the page, lest he should carry the news of what had happened back to the Sheriff. After this they buried the bodies, and, taking the letters, carried them themselves to the King.

When they arrived at the Palace, in the presence of the King, Little John fell on his knees and held the letter out. 'God save you, my liege lord,' he said; and the King unfolded the letters and read them.

'There never was yeoman in Merry England I longed so sore to see,' he said. 'But where is the monk that should have brought these letters?'

'He died by the way,' answered little John; and the King asked no more questions.

Twenty pounds each he ordered his treasurer to give to Much and to Little John, and made them yeomen of the crown. After which he handed his own seal to Little John and ordered him to bear it to the Sheriff, and bid him without delay bring Robin Hood unhurt into his presence.

Little John did as the King bade him, and the Sheriff, at sight of the seal, gave him and Much welcome, and set a feast before them, at which John led him to drink heavily. Soon he fell asleep, and then the two outlaws stole softly to the prison. Here John ran the porter through the body for trying to stop his entrance, and, taking the keys, hunted through the cells until he had found Robin. Thrusting a sword into his hand Little John whispered to his master to follow him, and they crept along till they reached the lowest part of the city wall, from which they jumped and were safe and free.

'Now, farewell,' said Little John, 'I have done you a

good turn for an ill.' 'Not so,' answered Robin Hood, 'I make you master of my men and me,' but Little John would hear nothing of it. 'I only wish to be your comrade, and thus it shall be,' he replied.

'Little John has beguiled us both,' said the King, when he heard of the adventure.

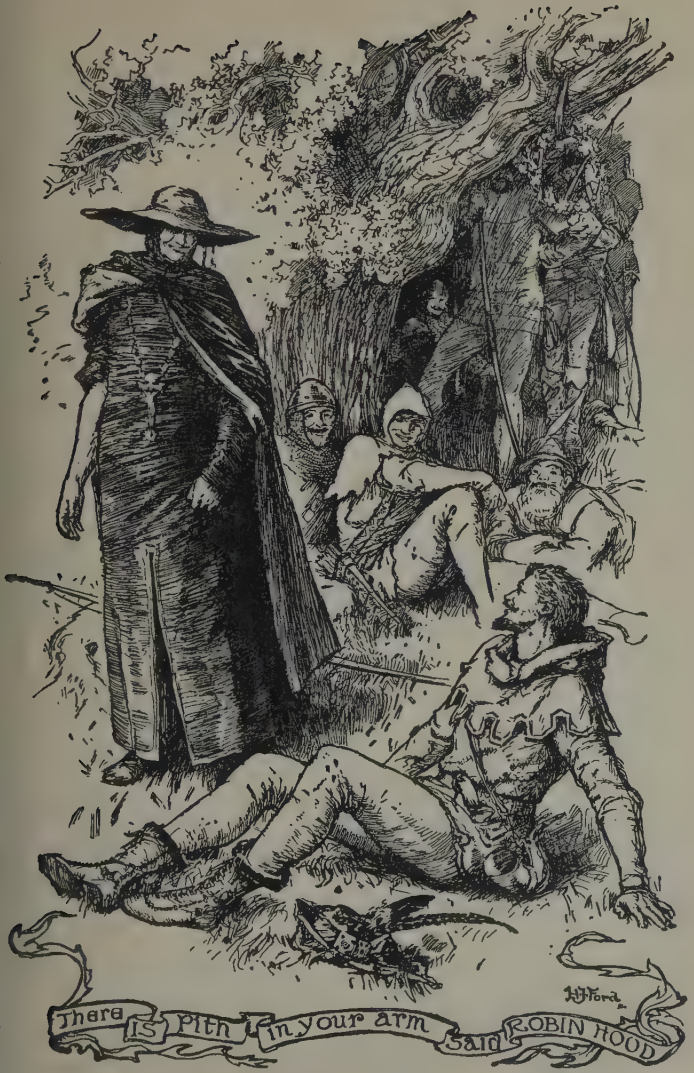
HOW THE KING VISITED ROBIN HOOD

Now the King had no mind that Robin Hood should do as he willed, and called his Knights to follow him to Nottingham, where they would lay plans how best to take captive the felon. Here they heard sad tales of Robin's misdoings, and how of the many herds of wild deer that had been wont to roam the forest in some places scarce one remained. This was the work of Robin Hood and his merry men, on whom the King swore vengeance with a great oath.

'I would I had this Robin Hood in my hands,' cried he, 'and an end should soon be put to his doings.' So spake the King; but an old Knight, full of days and wisdom, answered him and warned him that the task of taking Robin Hood would be a sore one, and best let alone. The King, who had seen the vanity of his hot words the moment that he had uttered them, listened to the old man, and resolved to bide his time, if perchance some day Robin should fall into his power.

All this time and for six weeks later that he dwelt in Nottingham the King could hear nothing of Robin, who seemed to have vanished into the earth with his merry men, though one by one the deer were vanishing too!

At last one day a forester came to the King, and told him that if he would see Robin he must come with him and take five of his best Knights. The King eagerly sprang up to do his bidding, and the six men clad in monks' clothes mounted their palfreys and rode down to the Abbey, the King wearing an Abbot's broad hat over


There is Pith in your arm said ROBIN HOOD

his crown and singing as he passed through the greenwood.

Suddenly at the turn of a path Robin and his archers appeared before them.

'By your leave, Sir Abbot,' said Robin, seizing the King's bridle, 'you will stay a while with us. Know that we are yeomen, who live upon the King's deer, and other food have we none. Now you have abbeys and churches, and gold in plenty; therefore give us some of it, in the name of holy charity.'

'I have no more than forty pounds with me,' answered the King, 'but sorry I am it is not a hundred, for you should have had it all.'

So Robin took the forty pounds, and gave half to his men, and then told the King he might go on his way. 'I thank you,' said the King, 'but I would have you know that our liege lord has bid me bear you his seal, and pray you to come to Nottingham.'

At this message Robin bent his knee.

> 'I love no man in all the world
> So well as I do my King';

he cried, 'and Sir Abbot, for thy tidings, which fill my heart with joy, to-day thou shalt dine with me, for love of my King.' Then he led the King into an open place, and Robin took a horn and blew it loud, and at its blast seven-score of young men came speedily to do his will.

'They are quicker to do his bidding than my men are to do mine,' said the King to himself.

Speedily the foresters set out the dinner, venison, and white bread, and the good red wine, and Robin and Little John served the King. 'Make good cheer,' said Robin, 'Abbot, for charity, and then you shall see what sort of life we lead, that so you may tell our King.'

When he had finished eating the archers took their bows, and hung rose-garlands up with a string, and every

man was to shoot through the garland. If he failed, he should have a buffet on the head from Robin.

Good bowmen as they were, few managed to stand the test. Little John and Will Scarlett, and Much, all shot wide of the mark, and at length no one was left in but Robin himself and Gilbert of the White Hand. Then Robin fired his last bolt, and it fell three fingers from the garland. 'Master,' said Gilbert, 'you have lost, stand forth and take your punishment.'

'I will take it,' answered Robin, 'but, Sir Abbot, I pray you that I may suffer it at your hands.'

The King hesitated. 'It did not become him,' he said, 'to smite such a stout yeoman,' but Robin bade him smite on; so he turned up his sleeve, and gave Robin such a buffet on the head that he rolled upon the ground.

'There is pith in your arm,' said Robin. 'Come, shoot a-main with me.' And the King took up a bow, and in so doing his hat fell back and Robin saw his face.

'My lord the King of England, now I know you well,' cried he, and he fell on his knees and all the outlaws with him. 'Mercy I ask, my lord the King, for my men and me.'

'Mercy I grant,' then said the King, 'and therefore I came hither, to bid you and your men leave the greenwood and dwell in my Court with me.'

'So shall it be,' answered Robin, 'I and my men will come to your Court, and see how your service liketh us.'

ROBIN AT COURT

'Have you any green cloth,' asked the King, 'that you could sell to me?' and Robin brought out thirty yards and more, and clad the King and his men in coats of Lincoln green. 'Now we will all ride to Nottingham,' said he, and they went merrily, shooting by the way.

The people of Nottingham saw them coming, and trembled as they watched the dark mass of Lincoln green drawing near over the fields. 'I fear lest our King be slain,' whispered one to another, 'and if Robin Hood gets into the town there is not one of us whose life is safe'; and every man, woman, and child made ready to fly.

The King laughed out when he saw their fright, and called them back. Right glad were they to hear his voice, and they feasted and made merry. A few days later the King returned to London, and Robin dwelt in his Court for twelve months. By that time he had spent a hundred pounds, for he gave largely to the Knights and Squires he met, and great renown he had for his open-handedness.

But his men, who had been born under the shadow of the forest, could not live amid streets and houses. One by one they slipped away, till only Little John and Will Scarlett were left. Then Robin himself grew home-sick, and at the sight of some young men shooting thought upon the time when he was accounted the best archer in all England, and went straightway to the King and begged for leave to go on a pilgrimage to Bernisdale.

'I may not say you nay,' answered the King, 'seven nights you may be gone and no more.' And Robin thanked him, and that evening set out for the greenwood.

It was early morning when he reached it at last, and listened thirstily to the notes of singing birds, great and small.

'It seems long since I was here,' he said to himself; 'it would give me great joy if I could bring down a deer once more'; and he shot a great hart, and blew his horn, and all the outlaws of the forest came flocking round him. 'Welcome,' they said, 'our dear master, back to the greenwood tree,' and they threw off their caps and fell on their knees before him in delight at his return.

THE DEATH OF ROBIN HOOD

For two and twenty years Robin Hood dwelt in Sherwood Forest after he had run away from Court, and naught that the King could say would tempt him back again. At the end of that time he fell ill; he neither ate nor drank, and had no care for the things he loved. 'I must go to merry Kirkley,' said he, 'and have my blood let.'

But Will Scarlett, who heard his words, spoke roundly to him. 'Not by *my* leave, nor without a hundred bowmen at your back. For there abides an evil man, who is sure to quarrel with you, and you will need us badly.'

'If you are afraid, Will Scarlett, you may stay at home, for me,' said Robin, 'and in truth no man will I take with me, save Little John only, to carry my bow.'

'Bear your bow yourself, master, and I will bear mine, and we will shoot for a penny as we ride.'

'Very well, let it be so,' said Robin, and they went on merrily enough till they came to some women weeping sorely near a stream.

'What is the matter, good wives?' said Robin Hood.

'We weep for Robin Hood and his dear body, which to-day must let blood,' was their answer.

'Pray why do you weep for me?' asked Robin; 'the Prioress is the daughter of my aunt, and my cousin, and well I know she would not do me harm for all the world.' And he passed on, with Little John at his side.

Soon they reached the Priory, where they were let in by the Prioress herself, who bade them welcome heartily, and not the less because Robin handed her twenty pounds

in gold as payment for his stay, and told her if he cost her more, she was to let him know of it. Then she began to bleed him, and for long Robin said nothing, giving her credit for kindness and for knowing her art, but at length so much blood came from him that he suspected treason. He tried to open the door, for she had left him alone in the room, but it was locked fast, and while the blood was still flowing he could not escape from the casement. So he lay down for many hours, and none came near him, and at length the blood stopped. Slowly Robin uprose and staggered to the lattice-window, and blew thrice on his horn; but the blast was so low, and so little like what Robin was wont to give, that Little John, who was watching for some sound, felt that his master must be nigh to death.

At this thought he started to his feet, and ran swiftly to the Priory. He broke the locks of all the doors that stood between him and Robin Hood, and soon entered the chamber where his master lay, white, with nigh all his blood gone from him.

'I crave a boon of you, dear master,' cried Little John.

'And what is that boon,' said Robin Hood, 'which Little John begs of me?' And Little John answered, 'It is to burn fair Kirkley Hall, and all the nunnery.'

But Robin Hood, in spite of the wrong that had been done him, would not listen to Little John's cry for revenge. 'I never hurt a woman in all my life,' he said, 'nor a man that was in her company. But now my time is done, that know I well; so give me my bow and a broad arrow, and wheresoever it falls there shall my grave be digged. Lay a green sod under my head and another at my feet, and put beside me my bow, which ever made sweetest music to my ears, and see that green and gravel make my grave. And, Little John, take care that I have length enough and breadth enough to lie in.' So he loosened his last arrow from the string and then died, and where the arrow fell Robin was buried.

ROBIN HOOD SHOOTS HIS LAST ARROW

THE
STORY OF GRETTIR THE STRONG

THE STORY OF GRETTIR THE STRONG

About nine hundred years ago, more or less, there lived in Iceland, at a homestead called Biarg, two old folks named Asmund the Greyhaired and his wife Asdis. At the time our story begins they had two sons, Atli the eldest, and Grettir, besides daughters; sixteen years later another son was born to them, named Illugi. Atli was a general favourite, in disposition good-natured and yielding, in this the very opposite of Grettir, who held to his own way, and was, besides, silent, reserved, and rough in manner. But he is described as fair to look on, broad-faced, short-faced, red-haired and much freckled, not of quick growth in his childhood. There was little love lost between him and his father, but his mother loved the boy right well. So matters sped till Grettir was ten years old, when, one day, his father told him to go and watch the geese on the farm, fifty of them, besides many goslings. The boy went, but with an ill grace, and shortly afterwards the geese were found all dead or dying, with many of their necks wrung, at which Asmund was mightily vexed. Again, one evening, being cold, he asked the boy to warm him by rubbing his back, but Grettir, taking up a wool-carder's comb, dropped it down his father's back. The old man was furiously angry, and would have beaten Grettir, had he not run away, while Asdis, though vexed, tried her best to make peace between them.

Next, Grettir was sent to tend the horses, amongst which was a favourite mare called Keingala, who always preferred the coldest and windiest spots to graze in; the boy was ill-clad and half-starved with cold, so, by way of

paying Keingala out for her uncomfortable choice of pasture, he drew a sharp knife right across her shoulder and along both sides of her back. When Asmund next saw the mare and stroked her back, the hide came off beneath his hand. He taxed Grettir with the deed, but the boy sneered mockingly and said nothing. Keingala had to be killed. Such and many other scurvy tricks did Grettir play in his childhood, but meanwhile he grew in body and strength, though none as yet knew him to be strong beyond his years.

This first came to be known shortly afterwards at Midfirth Water, where some ball games were being held on the ice. Grettir was now fourteen; and was matched to play with one Audun, several years older than himself. Audun struck the ball over Grettir's head, so that he could not catch it, and it bounded far away along the ice; Grettir brought it back, and in a rage threw it at Audun's forehead; Audun struck at him with his bat, but Grettir closed with him and wrestled, for a long time holding his own; but Audun was a man of full strength, and at last prevailed. Grettir's next performance brought him into more trouble. Asmund had a bosom friend named Thorkel Krafla, who paid him a visit at Biarg on his way to the Thing, or Icelandic parliament, with a retinue of sixty followers, for Thorkel was a great chief, and a man of substance. Each traveller had to carry his own provisions for the journey, including Grettir, who joined Thorkel's company. Grettir's saddle turned over, however, and his meal bag was lost, nor could he find it, notwithstanding a long search. Just then he saw a man who was in like plight with himself, having also lost his meal sack: his name was Skeggi, one of Thorkel's followers. All of a sudden Skeggi darted off, and Grettir saw him stoop and pick up a meal sack, which Skeggi claimed as his own. Grettir was not satisfied, and they fought for it; Skeggi cut at Grettir with his axe, but he wrenched it out of his hand, and clove his head in twain.

Thorkel then allowed Grettir his choice: whether to go on to the Thing, or return home. He chose the first alternative; but a lawsuit was set on foot by the heirs of the dead man. Thorkel paid the necessary fines, but Grettir was outlawed, banished from the country, and had to stay abroad three years.

Asmund entrusted his son to the keeping of a man called Haflidi, the captain of a ship that was sailing for Norway; father and son parted with but little sorrow between them, but Asdis accompanied the boy part of the way, and gave him a sword which had been owned by Jokul, her grandfather; for which Grettir thanked her well, saying he deemed it better than things of more worth, so he came to the ship. With the sailors he was no more popular than he had been elsewhere, for he would work only by fits and starts, as he pleased; besides, he had a gift of making very biting rhymes, which he indulged in at the expense of all on board. But when he did condescend to work he was a match for any four, or, as some say, for any eight men by reason of his strength. After they had sailed some way east over the sea, and had much thick weather, one night they ran aground on a rock near an island which turned out to be Haramsey, off Norway. The lord of that island was called Thorfinn, son of Karr the Old. When day dawned he sent down a boat to rescue the shipwrecked sailors, who were saved, with their merchandise, but their vessel broke up. Grettir remained with Thorfinn some time; and was fond of rambling about the island, going from house to house; and he made friends with one Audun, not, of course, the one who has already been mentioned.

One night the two noticed a great blaze on a ness or headland, and Grettir asked the reason of it, adding, that in his country such a fire would only burn above hidden treasure. Audun told him he had better not inquire too closely into the matter, which, however, as one might expect, only whetted his curiosity the more. He was

told accordingly that on that headland Karr the Old was buried; that at first father and son had but one farm on the island, but since Karr died he had so haunted the place that all the farmers who owned land were driven away. Thorfinn, therefore, now held the whole island, and to such good purpose, that whosoever enjoyed his protection was not worried by the ghost. Grettir determined to investigate, and providing himself with spades and tools, set off with Audun to dig into the 'barrow,' as these mounds of earth are called, which northern races and others used to raise over their dead. Leaving Audun to guard the rope by which he descended, Grettir found the interior of the cavern very dark, and a smell therein none of the sweetest. First he saw horse-bones, then he stumbled against the arm of a high chair wherein was a man sitting; great treasures of gold and silver lay heaped together, and under the man's feet a small chest full of silver. All this Grettir carried towards the rope, but while doing so he was suddenly seized in a strong grip; whereupon he let go the treasure and rushed at the Thing which lived in the barrow; and now they set on one another unsparingly enough. There was a battle, first one, then the other gaining a slight advantage, but at last the barrow-wight fell over on his back with a huge din; whereupon Grettir drew his sword, 'Jokul's gift,' and cut off Karr's head, laying it beside the thigh, for, in this way only, men said, could a ghost be laid. Grettir took the treasure and brought it to Thorfinn, who was not ill-pleased that his father's tomb had been rifled, for he held that wealth hidden in the ground was wealth wrongly placed, in which we shall probably agree with him.

After the events just described, Thorfinn went away with thirty of his men to one of his farms on the mainland, in order to keep the Yule-tide feast (Christmas). His wife and daughter, the latter of whom was ill in bed, remained at home. Now Thorfinn, some time previously,

GRETTIR FEELS KARR'S GRIP

had taken a leading part in passing a law, the object of which was that all berserkers should be outlawed. These berserkers were roving bands of pirates, brave fighters, but respecting no man's property; on the contrary, their chief object was to lay violent hands on women and goods to which they had no title. It is easily to be understood that Thorfinn, in consequence of his action, had incurred their bitterest enmity. One day Grettir observed a ship approaching, rowed by twelve men; it landed near Thornfinn's boatstand, wherein was his boat which was never launched by less than thirty men; nevertheless these twelve pushed it down to the water's edge, laid their own boat upon it, and bore it into the boatstand.

Grettir's suspicions being aroused, he went down, and after giving them a hearty welcome, asked who they were. The leader told him he was known as Thorir Paunch; that his brother was Ogmund, and the rest fellows of theirs. Grettir told them they could not have come at a better time, if, as he thought, they had some grudge against Thorfinn, for he was away from home, and would not be back till Yule was past, but his wife and daughter were in the house. 'Now am I well enough minded to take revenge on Thorfinn,' said Thorir, 'and this man is ready enough of tidings, and no need have we to drag the words out of him.' So they all went up to the farm, but the women were distracted with fear, thinking that Grettir had played false. He, however, induced the berserkers to lay aside their arms, and when evening was come, brought them beer in abundance, and entertained them with tales and merry jests. After a while he proposed to lead them to Thorfinn's treasure house: nothing loth they followed readily; when they were all inside he managed to slip out and lock them in. He then ran back for weapons: a broad-headed barbed spear, his sword and helmet. Now the berserkers knew they had been entrapped;

breaking down the panelling of a wall they rushed out into the passage, where in the nick of time arrived Grettir, who thrust Thorir through with his spear; Ogmund the Evil was pressing close behind, so that the same thrust which pierced the one transfixed the other also. The remainder defended themselves with logs and whatever lay ready to hand, or tried to escape; but Grettir slew all of them save two, who for the moment escaped, but were found next day under a rock, dead from cold and wounds.

Shortly afterwards Thorfinn returned, and when he was told of the wondrous deeds of Grettir, who had thus saved the honour of his house, he bade him come to him whenever he needed aid; and the two were now close friends; moreover, Grettir's fame began to spread abroad, and he became renowned all over Norway. Leaving his friend Thorfinn, he took passage in a ship belonging to one Thorkel, who lived in Heligoland. He welcomed Grettir heartily to his house, but with a man called Biorn, who lived there with him, the Icelander could by no means agree, nor indeed did others find it easy, for Biorn's temper was hasty and difficult.

It happened that a savage bear wrought havoc at that time, being so grim that it spared neither man nor beast, so one night Biorn set out to slay it. The bear was in its cave, in the track leading to which Biorn lay down, with his shield over him, to wait for the beast to stir abroad as its manner was. But the beast suspected the presence of the man, and was slow to move; delayed so long indeed that Biorn fell asleep. Now the bear became brisk enough, sallied forth, hooked its claws in Biorn's shield, and threw it over the cliff. Biorn woke suddenly and ran, just escaping its clutch; but the whole proceedings had been watched, and he had to endure many taunts and jeers. Grettir went afterwards and killed the beast, though not without a terrible struggle, in which they both fell over the rocks, but the bear was underneath,

and Grettir was able to stab it to the heart. More than ever then on account of this did ill-will against Grettir rankle in Biorn's breast. He sailed west to England, as master of Thorkel's ship; when he returned he met Grettir at a place called Drontheim-firth. The two took up their old quarrel again, fought on the strand, and Biorn was killed.

At that time Earl Svein was ruling over Norway as regent, the rightful king being but a boy. At the court in the Earl's service was Biorn's brother, Hiarandi, who was exceedingly wroth when he heard of Biorn's death, and begged the Earl's assistance in the matter. Svein therefore sent for Thorfinn and Grettir, but Hiarandi would not agree to any terms proposed, and lay in wait to take Grettir's life. With five others he sprang out from a certain court gate, dealt a blow at him with an axe, and wounded him; but Grettir and a companion turned on them and slew them all save one, who escaped and told the Earl. There remained yet another brother of Biorn and Hiarandi to take up the feud, but he fared no better, and was also slain. Earl Svein was now 'wondrous wroth' at this tale, for said he, 'Grettir has now slain three brothers, one at the heels of the other, and I will not thus bring wrongs into the land so as to take compensation for such unmeasured misdeeds'; so he would not listen to any proposals by Thorfinn to pay blood-money. However, many more added their words to Thorfinn's, and prayed the Earl to spare Grettir's life, for, after all, he had acted in self-defence, and if his life were to be forfeit, there would be slayings throughout the whole land. These arguments at length prevailed, Grettir was allowed to go in peace, and went back to Iceland, the term of his outlawry being expired.

Being now grown to man's estate, and having waxed greatly in bodily strength, he roamed about the country to see if there were any with whom he might match him-

self, and took it very ill that he found none. About this time, strange rumours were flying about to the effect that a farm belonging to one Thorhall was haunted. Thorhall was an honest man and very rich in cattle and livestock, but could hardly get a shepherd to stay in his service; whereat, being sore perplexed, he went for advice to Skapti the Lawman. Skapti promised to get him a shepherd called Glam, a Swede, for which Thorhall thanked him. On his return he missed two dun cows, went to look for them, and on the way met a man carrying faggots, who said his name was Glam. He was great of stature, uncouth in appearance, his eyes grey and glaring, and his hair wolf-grey. Thorhall told him Skapti had recommended him, adding that the place was haunted, but Glam made light of this: 'Such bugs will not scare me,' quoth he. There was a church at Thorhall-stead, but Glam loathed church-song, being godless, foul-tempered and surly, and no man could abide him, Thorhall's wife least of all. So time wore on till Christmas-eve, when Glam called for his meat, but was told that no Christian man would eat meat on that day. He insisted; and the housewife gave it, though prophesying evil would come of it. Glam took the food and went out growling and grumbling.

He was heard in the early morning on the hills, but not as the day wore on; then a snowstorm came, and Glam returned not that night nor yet the day following, so search parties were sent out, who found the sheep scattered wide about in fens, beaten down by the storm, or strayed up into the mountains. Then they came to a great beaten place high up in a valley, where it seemed as though there had been wrestling, stones and earth torn up, and signs of a severe struggle; looking closer, they found Glam dead, his body blue and swollen to the size of an ox. They tried to bring the body down to the church, but could only move it a very little way; they returned, therefore, and

told how they had tracked steps as great as if a cask bottom had been stamped down, leading from the beaten place up to beneath sheer rocks high up the valley, and along the track great stains of blood. From this men thought that the evil wight which had killed Glam had got such wounds as had sufficed for him, but none ever could say for certain.

The second day after Christmas men were sent again to bring Glam's body to the church, but though horses were put to drag it, they could not move the corpse except down hill, so Glam was buried where he lay. Now within a little time men became aware that Glam lay not quiet; he walked well-nigh night and day, and took to riding the house roofs at night, so much so that he nearly broke them in. The folk were exceedingly afraid thereat; many fainted or went mad, while others incontinently fled there and then. Another shepherd, big and strong, came to take Glam's place; he was nowise dismayed by the hauntings, but deemed it good sport rather than not when Glam rode the house roofs. But when another Christmas came the shepherd was missed; search was made, and he was found on the hillside by Glam's cairn, his neck broken, and every bone in his body smashed. Then Glam waxed more mighty than ever; the cattle bellowed and roared, and gored each other; the byre cracked, and a cattle-man who had been long in Thorhall's service was found dead, his head in one stall and feet in another. None could go up the dale with horse or hound, because it was straightway slain, and it was no easy task to get servants to remain at the steading.

Things had come to this pass when Grettir rode over to Thorhall-stead, where the owner gave him good welcome, though warning him that few cared to stay long under his roof. Grettir's horse was locked up in the stable, and the first night nothing happened; but on the second the stable was broken into, the horse dragged out to the door,

and every bone of him broken. Next night Grettir sat up to watch; and when a third of the night was past, he heard a terrible din as of one riding the roof, and driving his heels against the thatch so that every rafter cracked again. He went to the door, and saw Glam, whose head, as it appeared to him, was monstrously big. Glam came slowly in and took hold of a bundle lying on the seat, but Grettir planted his foot against a beam, seized the bundle also, and pulled against Glam with such strength that the wrapper was rent between them. Glam wondered who might this be that pulled with such strength against him, when Grettir rushed in, seized him round the waist, and tried to force him down backwards; but he shrank all aback by reason of Glam's strength, which, indeed, seemed to be almost greater than his own. A wondrous hard wrestling bout was that; but at last Grettir, gathering up his strength for a sudden effort, drove against Glam's breast, at the same moment pushing with both feet against the half-sunken stone that stood in the threshold of the door. For this Glam was not ready, therefore he reeled backwards and spun against the door, so that his shoulders caught against the upper part of it; the roof burst — both rafters and frozen thatch — and he fell open-armed backwards out of the house with Grettir over him.

It was bright moonlight without, with drift scudding over the moon; at that instant the moon's face cleared, and Glam glared up against her. By that sight only Grettir confessed himself dismayed beyond all that he had ever seen; nor, for weariness and fear together, could he draw his sword to strike off Glam's head withal. But Glam was crafty beyond other ghosts, so that now he spoke: 'Exceeding eager hast thou been to meet me, Grettir, but it will be deemed no wonder if this meeting work thee harm. This must I tell thee, that thou now hast but half the strength and manhood which was thy lot if thou hadst not met me; I may not take from thee the strength that was thine before, but this may I rule — that thou shalt never

be mightier than thou now art. Hitherto thou hast earned fame by thy deeds, but henceforth will wrongs and manslayings fall on thee, and the most part of thy doings will turn to thy woe and ill-hap, an outlaw shalt thou be made, and ever shall it be thy lot to dwell abroad. Therefore this fate I lay upon thee, ever in those days to see these eyes of mine with thine eyes, and thou wilt find it hard to be alone, and that shall drag thee unto death.' Grettir's wits came back to him, and therewith he drew his short sword, cut off Glam's head, and laid it at his thigh. Glam's body was burnt, the ashes put into a beast's skin and buried. Thorhall, overjoyed at the deliverance, treated Grettir handsomely, giving him a good horse and decent clothes, for his own had been torn to pieces in the struggle. Grettir's fame spread far abroad for this deed, and none was deemed his equal for boldness and prowess. Yet Glam's curse began already to work, for Grettir dared not go out after nightfall, for then he seemed to see all kinds of horrors. It became a proverb in the land that Glam gives Glam-sight to those who see things otherwise than as they are, which we now express by the word 'glamour.'

Now Grettir had a strong wish to go to Norway, for Earl Svein had fled the country after being beaten in a battle, and Olaf the Saint held sole rule as king. There was also a man named Thorir of Garth who had been in Norway, and was a friend of the king; this man was anxious to send out his sons to become the king's men. The sons accordingly sailed, and came to a haven at Stead, where they remained some days, during stormy weather. Grettir also had sailed after them, and the crew bore down on Stead, being hard put to it by reason of foul weather, snow and frost; and they were all worn, weary and wet. To save expense they did not put into the harbour, but lay to beside a dyke, where, though perished with cold, they could not light a fire. As the night wore on they saw that a great fire was burning on

the opposite side of the sound up which they had sailed, and fell to talking and wondering whether by possibility any man might fetch that fire. Grettir said little, but made ready for swimming; he had on but a cape and sail-cloth breeches. He girt up the cape and tied a rope strongly round his middle, and had with him a cask; then he leapt overboard and swam across. There he saw a house, and heard much talking and noise, so he turned towards it, and found it to be a house of refuge for coasting sailors; twelve men were inside sitting round a great fire on the floor, drinking, and these were the sons of Thorir. When Grettir burst in he knew not who was there, he himself seemed huge of bulk, for his cape was frozen all over into ice; therefore the men took him to be some evil troll, and smote at him with anything that lay to hand; but Grettir put all blows aside, snatched up some firebrands, and swam therewith back to the ship. Grettir's comrades were mightily pleased, and bepraised him and his journey and his prowess.

Next morning they crossed the sound, but found no house, only a great heap of ashes, and therein many bones of men. They asked if Grettir had done this misdeed; but he said it had happened even as he had expected. The men said wherever they came that Grettir had burnt those people; and the news soon spread that the victims were the sons of Thorir of Garth. Grettir therefore now grew into such bad repute that he was driven from the ship, and scarcely anyone would say a good word for him. As matters were so hopeless he determined to explain all to the king, and offer to free himself from the slander by handling hot iron without being burned. His ill-luck still pursued him, for when all was ready in the church where the ceremony was about to take place, a wild-looking lad, or, as some said, an unclean spirit, started up from no one knew where, and spoke such impertinent words to Grettir that he felled him with a blow of his fist. After this the king would not allow the ceremony to go on: 'Thou art far too

GRETTIR OVERTHROWS THORIR REDBEARD

luckless a man to abide with us, and if ever man has been cursed, of all men must thou have been,' said he; and advised him to go back to Iceland in the summer. Meanwhile Asmund the Greyhaired died, and was buried at Biarg, and Atli succeeded to his goods, but was soon afterwards basely murdered by a neighbouring chief who bore him ill-will for his many friendships, and grudged him his possessions. Thorir of Garth brought a suit at the Thing to have Grettir outlawed for the burning of his sons; but Skapti the Lawman thought it scarcely fair to condemn a man unheard, and spoke these wise words: 'A tale is half told if one man tells it, for most folk are readiest to bring their stories to the worser side when there are two ways of telling them.' Thorir, however, was a man of might, and had powerful friends; these between them pushed on the suit, and with a high hand rather than according to law obtained their decree. Thus was Grettir outlawed for a deed of which he was innocent. These three pieces of bad news greeted him all at once on his return to Iceland: his father's death, his brother's murder, and his own outlawry.

One of the first things he did was to avenge his brother's murder, but there was a price on his head, and he wandered about from place to place in the wilderness. On one occasion, as he lay asleep, some men of Icefirth came upon him, and though they were ten in number they had much ado to take him; but at last they bound him, and put up a gallows, for they intended to hang him. Fortunately for Grettir, at that moment there rode along the wife of the ruling chief of that district, who interposed and set him free, on his promise not to stir up strife in that neighbourhood. His next adventure was at a place called Ernewaterheath where he had built himself a hut, and lived by fishing in the river. There were other outlaws, who, on hearing that Grettir was in the neighbourhood, made a bargain with one Grim that he should slay him. Grim begged Grettir to take him into his hut, which

he agreed to do, as he was so frightened when alone in the dark; nevertheless, having his suspicions of the man, he kept his short sword always within reach. One day Grim came back from fishing, and thought Grettir was asleep, for he made no movement when Grim suddenly stamped his foot; thinking he now had his chance, he stole on tip-toe to the bedside, took Grettir's short sword and unsheathed it. But at the very moment when Grim had it raised aloft to stab Grettir, the supposed sleeping man sprang up, knocked Grim down, wrenched the sword out of his hand and killed him. Next, Grettir's enemy Thorir of Garth heard of his whereabouts, and prevailed upon one Thorir Redbeard to attempt to slay him. So Redbeard laid his plans, with the object, as it is quaintly phrased, of 'winning' Grettir. He, however, declined to be 'won,' for Redbeard fared no better than Grim. He tried to slay the outlaw while he was swimming back from his nets, but Grettir sank like a stone and swam along the bottom till he reached a place where he could land unseen by Redbeard. He then came on him from behind, while Redbeard was still looking for his appearance out of the water; heaved him over his head, and caused him to fall so heavily that his weapon fell out of his hand. Grettir seized it and smote off his head.

Thorir of Garth was anything but satisfied with the result of his endeavour to have Grettir killed, and gathered together a force of nearly eighty men to take him; but this time Grettir was forewarned by a friend, and took up a position in a very narrow pass. When Thorir's men came up and attacked him he slew them one by one till he had killed eighteen and wounded many more, so that Thorir said, 'Lo, now we have to do with trolls and not men,' and bade the rest retire. Shortly afterwards he collected some twenty men and rode off again to search for Grettir. This time he was within an ace of coming upon the outlaw unawares; but Grettir and a friend had just time to conceal themselves when Thorir rode by. After the party had

passed, an idea occurred to Grettir. 'They will not deem their journey good if we be not found,' he said; so, though much against the advice of his friend, he disguised himself in a slouch hat and other clothes, took a staff and intercepted Thorir's band at a point where he knew they must pass. They asked him whether he had seen any men riding over the heath. 'Yes,' he said, 'the men you seek I have seen, and you have missed them only by a very little; they are there on the south side of these bogs to the left.' On hearing this, off galloped Thorir and his men, but the bogs were a sort of quagmire, wherein the horses stuck fast; and remained wallowing and struggling for the greater part of the day, while the riders 'gave to the devil withal the wandering churl who had so befooled them.'

Grettir now deemed it advisable to go about the country in disguise, and, under the name of Guest, came to a place called Sandheaps, much haunted by trolls. Two winters before he arrived the husband of the goodwife had mysteriously disappeared during her absence, none knew whither; her name was Steinvor. A loud crashing had been heard in the night about the man's bed, but the folk were too frightened to rise and find out the cause; in the morning Steinvor came back, but her husband was gone. Again, the next year, while she was away at church, a house-servant remained behind; but he too vanished, and bloodstains were found about the outer door. Grettir was told of this when he came to Sandheaps on Christmas-eve, staying there under the name of Guest. Steinvor, as usual, went away to worship, and remained absent that night, leaving Grettir at home. He sat up to watch, and about midnight he heard a great noise outside, shortly after which there came into the hall a huge troll-wife, with a trough in one hand and a monstrous chopper in the other. Seeing Grettir she rushed at him, but he closed with her, and there was a terrible wrestling match. She was the stronger, and

dragged him from the house, breaking down all the fittings of the door; down she dragged him to the river which flowed through the farm, and Grettir, exhausted with the struggle, was well-nigh at the limit of his endurance. Making one last great effort, he managed to draw his short sword and strike off the hag's arm at the shoulder; then was he free, and she fell into the gulf and was carried down the rapids. This, at least, was Grettir's story; but the men of the neighbourhood say that day dawned on them while they were still wrestling, and that therefore the troll burst; for this trolls do, according to Norse tradition, if they happen to be caught above ground by the rising sun.

Steinvor came back with the priest, who asked Grettir where he thought the two men were who had disappeared. He replied they were, he thought, in the gulf: but if the priest would help him he would find out. The priest agreed. Accordingly, taking a rope with them, they followed the stream down to a waterfall where they saw a cave up under the cliff — a sheer rock the cliff was, nearly fifty fathoms down to the water. The priest's heart misgave him, but Grettir determined to make the attempt; so, driving a peg into the ground, he made the rope fast to it and bade the priest watch it; then he tied a stone to the end and let it sink into the water. When all was ready, he took his short sword and leapt into the water. Disappearing from the priest's view, he dived under the waterfall — and hard work it was, for the whirlpool was strong; but he reached a projecting rock on which he rested awhile. A great cave was under the waterfall, and the river fell over it from the sheer rocks. Grettir climbed into the cave, where he found a great fire flaming, and a giant sitting beside it, huge and horrible to look upon. He smote at the newcomer with a broadsword, but Grettir avoided the blow, and returned such a mighty stroke with his own sword that the giant fell dead at once. The priest on the bank,

seeing blood washed down by the swirling waters, and thinking Grettir was killed, fled in alarm and spread the report of his death. Grettir meanwhile stayed in the cave till far on into the night; he found there the bones of two men, which he put in a bag; swimming with them to the rope, he shook it, but as the priest had gone he had to draw himself up by strength of hands. He took the bones to the church, where he left them, returning himself to Sandheaps. When the priest saw Grettir, the latter taxed him with breach of faith in quitting the rope, which charge the priest must needs admit; however, no great harm had resulted, the bones were buried, and the district was freed from hauntings. Grettir received much credit, in so far as he had cleansed the land from these evil wights who had wrought the loss of the men there in the dale.

Our hero remained in hiding at Sandheaps, but Thorir of Garth heard of him and sent men to take him. Grettir accordingly left the place and went to Maddervales, to Gudmund the Rich, of whom he begged shelter. Gudmund, however, dared not harbour him, but advised him to seek shelter in an isle called Drangey in Skagafirth. The place, he said, was excellent for defence, for without ladders no one could land. Grettir agreed to go, and went home to Biarg to bid his mother farewell. His brother, Illugi, was now fifteen years old, a handsome boy, and he overheard Grettir's conversation with his mother about his proposed departure to Drangey. 'I will go with thee, brother,' said he, 'though I know not that I shall be of any help to thee, unless that I shall be ever true to thee, nor run from thee whiles thou standest up.' Asdis bade them farewell, warning Grettir against sorcery; yet well she knew that she would never see either of her sons again. They left Biarg, going north towards Drangey; and on the way met with a big ill-clad loon called Thorbiorn Noise, a man too lazy to work, and a great swaggerer; but they allowed him to join them.

Now Drangey was an island whose cliffs rose sheer up from the sea; there was good pasturage on it, and many sheep and cattle, owned by about twenty men, who amongst them held the island in shares. Two men called Hialti and Thorbiorn Angle, being the richest men, had the largest shares. When the men got ready to fetch their beasts from the island for slaughter, they found it occupied, which they thought strange; but supposing the men in possession to be shipwrecked sailors, they rowed to the place where the ladders were, but found these drawn up. Persuasion was of no avail, so the baffled owners retired, and in one way or another made over their respective shares to Angle, on the understanding that he would free the island from these unwelcome intruders. The months wore on, and brought no change; but now Grettir said he would go to the mainland and get victuals. Disguising himself, he carried out his plan, leaving Illugi and Noise to guard the ladders. Sports were being held at a place called Heron-ness, and the stranger was asked if he would wrestle. 'Time was,' he said, 'when he had been fond of it, but he had now given it up; yet, upon condition of peace and safe conduct being assured to him until such time as he returned home, he was willing to try a bout.' This was agreed to, whereupon he cast aside his disguise, and stood revealed as Grettir the outlaw. All saw that they had been beguiled, yet, for their oath's sake, they could do nothing. First Hialti alone tried to throw Grettir, but met with nothing but a mighty fall; then he and his brother Angle tried together, but though each of them had the strength of two men they were no match for their antagonist, and had to retire discomfited.

Then Grettir went back to Drangey. Two winters had now been spent on the island, but firewood was hard to come by; Noise was sent down to gather drifted logs from the sea, but he grew lazier and grumbled more and more every day, letting the fire out on one occasion,

whereas his duty was to keep it burning. Grettir determined to swim to the mainland and bring back wood; in this he was successful, though the distance was a sea mile, whereat all said his prowess both on land and sea was marvellous. Meanwhile Angle, having been baffled in a second attempt to land and drive out Grettir, induced a young man called Hœring, an expert climber, to try to scale the cliffs, promising him if successful a very large

The Witch Thurid cuts a charm on the log.

reward. Angle rowed him over, and Hœring, did, indeed, scale the precipice, but young Illugi was on the watch, chased him round the island, and Hœring, sore pressed, leapt over the cliff and was killed.

About this time, Grettir having been so many years in outlawry, many thought that the sentence should be annulled; and it was deemed certain that he would be pardoned in the next ensuing summer; but they who had

owned the island were exceedingly discontented at the prospect of his acquittal, and urged Angle either to give back the island or slay Grettir. Now Angle had a foster-mother, Thurid; she was old and cunning in witchcraft, which she had learnt in her youth; for though Christianity had now been established in the island, yet there remained still many traces of heathendom. Angle and she put out in a ten-oared boat to pick a quarrel with Grettir, of which the upshot was that the outlaw threw a huge stone into the boat, where the witch lay covered up with wrappings, and broke her leg. Angle had to endure many taunts at the failure of all his attempts to outplay Grettir. One day, Thurid was limping along by the sea, when she found a large log, part of the trunk of a tree. She cut a flat space on it, carved magic characters, or runes, on the root, reddened them with her blood, and sang witch-words over them; then she walked backwards round it, and widdershins — which means in a direction against the sun — and thrust the log out to sea under many strong spells, in such wise that it should drive out to Drangey. In the teeth of the wind it went, till it came to the island, where Illugi and Grettir saw it, but knowing it boded them ill, they thrust it out from shore; yet next morning was it there again, nearer the ladders than before; but again they drove it out to sea. The days wore on to summer, and a gale sprang up with wet; the brothers being short of firewood, Noise was sent down to the shore to look for drift, grumbling at being ordered out in bad weather, when, lo! the log was there again, and he fetched it up.

Grettir was angry with Noise, and not noticing what the log was, hewed at it with his axe, which glanced from the wood and cut into his leg, right down to the bone. Illugi bound it up, and at first it seemed as though the wound was healed. But after a time his leg took to paining Grettir, and became blue and swollen, so that he could not sleep, and Illugi watched by him night

and day. At this time Thurid advised Angle to make another attempt on the island; he therefore gathered a force of a dozen men together, and set sail in very foul weather, but no sooner had they reached open sea than the wind lulled, so they came to Drangey at dusk. Noise had been told to guard the ladders, and had gone out as usual with very ill grace; he thought to himself he would not draw them up, so he lay down there and fell asleep, remaining all day long in slumber till Angle came to the island. Mounting the ladders, he and his men found Noise snoring at the top; arousing him roughly, they learned from him what had happened, and how Grettir lay sick in the hut with Illugi tending him. Angle thrashed Noise soundly for betraying his master, and the men made for the hut. Illugi guarded the door with the greatest valour, and when they thrust at him with spears he struck off all the spear heads from the shafts. But some of the men leapt up on to the roof, tore away the thatch, and broke one of the rafters. Grettir thrust up with a spear and killed one man, but he could not rise from his knee by reason of his wound; the others leapt down and attacked him; young Illugi threw his shield over him and made defence for both in most manly wise. Grettir killed another man, whose body fell upon him, so that he could not use his sword; wherefore Angle at that moment was able to stab him between the shoulders, and many another wound they gave him till they thought he was dead. Angle took Grettir's short sword and struck at the head of the body with such force that a piece of the sword-blade was nicked out. So died Grettir, the bravest man of all who ever dwelt in Iceland.

The gallant young Illugi was offered his life by Angle if he would promise not to try to avenge Grettir; but he scorned the offer, and was slain next day; the brothers were buried in a cairn on the island. Noise was taken aboard the boat, but bore himself so ill that he too was killed. Now Angle thought to claim from Thorir of

Garth the reward set upon Grettir's head; but the murderer was very ill spoken of in the land: first, because he had used sorcery, which was against the law; next, that he had acted a cowardly part in bearing arms against a half-dead man. A suit of outlawry was brought against him in the Thing; but seeing that it would go against him he escaped to Norway. In that country lived an elder half-brother of Grettir, who had heard of his fate and determined to avenge him; neither knew the other by sight. Angle, however, becoming uneasy, went to Micklegarth (Constantinople), whither he was followed by Thorstein Dromond. One day, at a weapon-showing, or exhibition of arms, Angle drew the short sword which had belonged to Grettir; it was praised by all as a good weapon, but the notch in the edge was a blemish. Angle related how he had slain Grettir, and how the notch came to be there. Thereupon Thorstein, who was present, knew his man, and asked to be allowed, like the rest, to see the short sword; Angle gave it to him, whereupon Thorstein clove his head in two with it, and Angle fell to earth dead and dishonoured.

Thus Grettir was avenged.